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39 An Ideal Husband	Oscar Wilde
40 Intentions	Oscar Wilde
41 Lady Windermere's Fan	Oscar Wilde
42 Charmides and other Poems	Oscar Wilde
43 Harvest Home	E. V. Lucas
44 A Little of Everything	E. V. Lucas
45 Vailima Letters	Robert Louis Stevenson
46 Hills and the Sea	Hilaire Belloc
47 The Blue Bird	Maurice Maeterlinck
50 Charles Dickens	G. K. Chesterton
53 Letters from a Self-Made Merchant to his Son	George Horace Lorimer
54 The Life of John Ruskin	W. G. Collingwood
57 Sevastopol and other Stories	Leo Tolstoy
58 The Lore of the Honey-Bee	Tickner Edwardes
60 From Midshipman to Field Marshal	Sir Evelyn Wood
62 John Boyes, King of the Wa-Kikuyu	John Boyes
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64 The Vicar of Morwenstow	S. Baring-Gould
65 Old Country Life	S. Baring-Gould
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96 A Picked Company	Hilaire Belloc
116 The Survival of Man	Sir Oliver Lodge
126 Science from an Easy Chair	Sir Ray Lankester
141 Variety Lane	E. V. Lucas
144 A Shilling for my Thoughts	G. K. Chesterton
146 A Woman of No Importance	Oscar Wilde
149 A Shepherd's Life	W. H. Hudson
193 On Nothing	Hilaire Belloc
200 Jane Austen and her Times	G. F. Mitten
214 Select Essays	Maurice Maeterlinck
223 Two Generations	Leo Tolstoy
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225 A Knight of Spain	Marjorie Bowen
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229 My Friend the Chauffeur	C. N. and A. M. Williamson
230 The Saving of a Derelict	Maurice Drake
231 Cameos	Marie Corelli
232 The Happy Valley	B. M. Croker
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THE
COMPUTERIZED

KINSMAN

BY

MRS. ALFRED SIDGWICK

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THE KINSMAN

I

MR. HERBERT GAMMAGE said he was sick of it. He had arrived late at the office three days running, and the chief had made himself most disagreeable in consequence.

"You'll be sicker still if old Angelo gives you the sack," said Mr. James Salter, who sat next to Mr. Gammage in the outer office. "He's bound to if you play the giddy goat like you have this week."

"Much I'd care," protested Mr. Gammage.

"What'd you do? Got to live, 'aven't you, and a berth's a berth. Look at pore old Billy Saunders."

"My grandfather went out to Orstralia," said Gammage, moodily.

"Come back again without a penny, didn't he? You were alluding to it only the other day."

"He was a bad lot," said Mr. Gammage, "but he belonged to a high family. His name was Blois."

"How do you spell it?"

Mr. Gammage wrote the name on a slip of paper and handed it to his friend.

"That's French," said Mr. Salter. "You ought to call it Blwor."

"Wrong again," said Mr. Gammage, "it ain't French, and you don't call it Blwor. Think my mother didn't know?"

"Never having had the pleasure of your mother's acquaintance, I can't say," replied Mr. Salter, "but French is French. At least, so I was brought up to believe."

The sudden return of the head clerk put a stop to

the discussion, and soon after an interruption to work was caused by the chief himself, who came into the outer office to ask Mr. Gammage where he had been at school. It seemed that Mr. Gammage thought three dozen pairs of gloves at one and eleven the pair should be charged £2 16s. 11d., and that he had recorded his opinion on an invoice.

"There certainly seems to be a slight mistake, sir," he said, after he had stared at the figures for some time. "I wonder how I arrived at it."

Mr. Angelo, a shrewd, irascible little man, with foreign blood in his veins and fluent Cockney English on his lips, said he could give a guess. He had a sheaf of invoices in his hands, and he threw them on Mr. Gammage's desk as he went away again.

"Wanted to pitch 'em at your head, but too much the gentleman," said Mr. Salter, interpreting his employer's feelings with his usual acumen.

"I hate arithmetic," said Mr. Gammage, pleasantly. "I never had any turn for it."

"Then why are you here?" said Mr. Jackson, the head clerk.

"Same reason as you," said Mr. Gammage. "You don't come to enjoy yourself, do you?"

"I get through my work," said the head clerk.

"So'll I—in time," said Mr. Gammage, watching a sparrow fight on an adjacent roof.

For another hour the three men worked steadily. At least Mr. Salter and Mr. Jackson did. Mr. Gammage, who had been to bed late, yawned a good deal, found his nails needed trimming, hunted through his desk for a penknife that was not there, looked at his watch repeatedly because the time passed so slowly, and rose from his chair the moment the clock struck one.

"Those invoices ready?" said the head clerk.

"Not yet," said Mr. Gammage, putting on his hat.

"Wish it was dinner hour all day," he said to Mr. Salter, as they passed into the street together. "I 'ate work, and I don't mind who knows it."

"That's where you make an error," said Mr. Salter, sententiously. "You should keep the fact from Angelo better than you've done lately."

"Looks like a fine Whitsuntide," said Mr. Gammage, sheering off from an unpleasant subject.

"Well, I want one. I'm going home, and I mean to bike it."

"I'm going to Trevalla."

"Want your motor for that trip," said Mr. Salter.

They had reached the eating-house they patronized, and though it was crowded they managed to find a quiet corner, and to catch the eye of their favourite waitress. They ordered steak and kidney pudding for two, and then they resumed their conversation.

"There's an excursion, you see," said Mr. Gammage. "But it doesn't get back till five o'clock on Wednesday morning."

"Then what's the good of it to you?"

"I'm going to ask Angelo for the extra day. Think he'll mind?"

Mr. Salter thought Angelo would mind, and that he would not hesitate to say so.

"It isn't as if you'd made yourself over and above valuable," he said, trying to put it delicately. "Look how unpleasant he was only this morning over those invoices."

"It's nothing new," said Mr. Gammage; "there's no pleasing some people."

"Can't you keep near home?"

"I've got an invite and I want to accept it. Trevalla is where my grandfather came from, and I've always thought I'd have a look at the place."

"Any Blwors left there?" said Mr. Salter; "is the invite from them?"

"It is not," said Mr. Gammage. "My grandfather and his brother went to Australia simultaneously about fifty years ago, and they were the last of that family. It was a caddit branch."

"A what?" said Mr. Salter, turning over his steak and kidney pudding.

"A caddit branch. My great-grandfather was a younger son. He had no money."

"Same trouble with mine," said Mr. Salter; "but didn't your mother grow up at Trevalla? I've heard the Martins talk of her."

"Yes," said Mr. Gammage, "my grandfather married beneath him."

"Careless," said Mr. Salter, "might have considered you."

"I think so," said Mr. Gammage; "but he didn't. He married the daughter of a small farmer; the people he had lodged with, in fact."

"Awful come down for a Blwor," said Mr. Salter, who was the son of a small farmer himself.

"Rather," said Mr. Gammage, "but that's how it is my mother knew the Martins. Some of them are still at Trevalla, and it's from them the invite has come. They've always kept up with their cousins at Barnes, and they knew I was living there as paying guest."

"And was courtin' Miss Florrie."

"They wouldn't be likely to hear that because the fact chiefly exists in your imagination."

"Is that so? Wish I had your looks, Bert."

"Much good they've done me so far," said Mr. Gammage. But as he got up to go he put on his hat with the rakish tilt that he thought became him, while a slight smile relieved the gloom of his face. He was a tall, well-made young man, and he would have been remarkably good-looking if there had been a more intelligent light in his eyes and lines of greater firmness about his mouth and chin. His features were well cut, his hair was dark, and his complexion pale and clear. He wore the newest thing that the City showed in ties and collars, and he had a taste for perfumes. On one occasion when he brought out his handkerchief in his chief's presence that brute used a rude Saxon word, and said he didn't want a civet cat in his office. This was one of many little offences that rankled in Mr. Gammage's mind when he reflected

on his present circumstances and wished he could alter them.

"Wonder how a country life would suit me?" he said to his friend, as they went slowly back to Wood Street.

"What's your idea of a country life?"

"Dog-cart . . . full of little packages. Why shouldn't I travel for a country firm?"

"It wouldn't suit yours truly. The country gives me the hump. I like civilization—especially at night. . . . Putney High and gas-lamps."

"I want a change," said Mr. Gammage. "Wonder how I'd like the sea . . . or the stage . . . or journalism. Whenever I spend a halfpenny on a paper I think how easy it must be to write it."

"That may be an illusion," said Mr. Salter. "A friend of mine makes a bit now and then by writing poetry, but he says there's almost more trouble in it than it's worth."

"Perhaps it doesn't come natural to him," said Mr. Gammage. "What sort of poetry does he write?"

"All kinds. Twice it was hair curlers he got paid for. Last time it was pills."

"I don't suppose there's a living in it," said Mr. Gammage, thoughtfully.

The afternoon hours dragged. The head clerk and Mr. Salter worked steadily enough, but Mr. Gammage grew more and more drowsy. At last he fell fast asleep, his head on his arms. A sharp pinch, administered with the best intention by Mr. Salter, awoke him so unpleasantly that he uttered an unseemly yell and swept his inkstand on to the office floor. The crash roused him, and he became aware that Mr. Angelo had come into the outer office and was clamouring for invoices.

"I am afraid they are not quite ready, sir," said Mr. Gammage. He always addressed Mr. Angelo in tones of dulcet politeness. He saw no reason, he said, for behaving in an ungentlemanly way because his employer was no gentleman. Unluckily, Mr. Angelo had a peppery temper, and this particular

mixture of incompetence and finicking civility drove him into a fury. When Mr. Gammage approached with his pouncet box, Mr. Angelo wanted to knock it out of his clerk's hand with a bludgeon.

"Ready," he shouted, "your jobs never are. Give me what you've done. I haven't time to go to sleep."

Mr. Gammage unwillingly gathered together a small sheaf of papers from his desk and handed them to his employer. Mr. Angelo went back to his private office and banged the door after him.

"Like you see a tiger go off with a bone," said Mr. Gammage, wearily. "He'll enjoy himself now. I've felt half asleep all day. Shouldn't wonder if there were a few mistakes. Those beastly farthings get me. What am I going to mop up this ink with? Lend me your coat, Jimmy."

Mr. Salter was not obliging enough to do that, but he found some old blotting-paper that did equally well. Then Mr. Gammage actually worked for nearly twenty minutes. He knew that he had better. But just as the unwonted strain began to tell on him and he leaned back to yawn, the door of the private office opened again.

"Yes, I want you," said Mr. Angelo, meeting the young man's eye.

"Directly, sir," said Mr. Gammage obligingly, and went into the private office.

Mr. Angelo was sitting at his writing-table, and in front of him was the little pile of invoices that had occupied Mr. Gammage most of the day. They were all torn neatly in half. The young man observed this as he presented the new ones.

"Which end of the penholder did you use for these?" inquired Mr. Angelo, separating half a dozen from the rest; and his clerk remembered that he had filled in some while there was a hair in his nib, and that he had felt too languid to take it out.

"What day of the month is it?" his employer went on, asking a second question before any one could answer the first, which was just one of his un-

gentlemanly ways, as Mr. Gammage complained later. "How many pence are there in a hundred and eight farthings? What is twelve times three and six? Take the whole lot back, and do them over again."

"You have not informed me what is wrong yet, sir," objected Mr. Gammage.

"Inform yourself. Ask the errand boy. Ask the shoeblack at the end of the street. They'll tell you the date, anyhow. They'd show you how to write and reckon, if you were capable of learning; but I suppose you're not."

"You don't require all these done over again to-night I suppose?" said the injured young man.

"Every one of them."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Gammage, looking at the pile of papers in his hand instead of at his chief's face. "I shall be pleased to get them right, I'm sure, but it will take me a long time. I wanted to ask you, sir——"

"How to spell Marseilles?"

"Could I have an extra day next week, sir, returning on Wednesday instead of Tuesday. I shall be working overtime to-night, so perhaps you——"

Mr. Angelo looked as if he wanted to dance and restrained himself by main force. Then he opened a drawer and shut it with a bang. That seemed to do him good.

"You may stay away from the office on Tuesday," he began.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Gammage, not at all surprised.

"Provided you stay away altogether," concluded Mr. Angelo.

"Of course I have no desire to do that," said Mr. Gammage, sulkily.

"Then you'll be at your desk on Tuesday at the usual time. That will do, Mr. Gammage."

"What luck?" whispered Mr. Salter, seeing that his friend looked put out.

"The usual," said Mr. Gammage. "I'm sick of it."

II

WHEN Mr. Salter reached Waterloo there was the usual little crowd of people in front of the train board in the north station. He joined it himself, and found there was a quick train to Putney in five minutes. As he made his way out of the crowd again he saw the pretty face of Miss Florrie Martin, and stopped to speak to her.

"Goin' by the 6.28, Miss Martin?" he began.

"I'm waitin' for Bert," she said. "I can't think why he doesn't turn up."

"He won't turn up for hours. He's detained on business."

The girl's face fell woefully.

"I've got two tickets given for the Fulham Theatre to-night," she said. "I did think of letting him know, and then it seemed unnecessary. He always comes by the 6.28."

"Lines," said Mr. Salter.

"I suppose I may as well go on. It's no use hangin' about here."

"We must hurry if we want to catch the 6.28."

"You didn't seem in much of a hurry just now."

"I wasn't," said Mr. Salter. "I'd have missed the train with pleasure for the sake of talking to you."

They had reached their platform by this time, and saw the guard give the signal for departure as they passed the barrier. The train began to move, the two young people made a dash for it, amidst cries of "stand back." Mr. Salter wrenched open a door, and helped Miss Martin in before him, and was shoved forward himself by an indignant porter, who travelled some distance on the step of the carriage on purpose to tell Mr. Salter what he thought of him. For a moment the altercation was lively. Then the porter had to jump off, and Mr. Salter found that he and Miss Martin had the compartment to themselves.

"This is luck," he said, dropping into a corner seat and fanning himself with his evening paper.

"I'm glad we caught it," said Florrie.

"Having the compartment to ourselves I mean," said Mr. Salter.

"I don't see any particular turn in that. Of course it gives you more room to open your paper."

"I wasn't thinking of my paper."

"But you want to read it. Don't let me hinder you."

"You don't hinder me. You wouldn't hinder me if we stayed here a week. I wish we could."

"It's easy talking like that when you know you'll be at Putney in ten minutes and go home to supper."

"I wish you could see into my heart," said Mr. Salter.

"I wish I could, too. I should like to see what really did keep Bert to-night. I believe you know and won't tell me."

"If you had one of those crystals like the palmists use, you could look at it and see Bert slaving away at the office. Only that and nothing more as the gentleman said of the Raven."

"What gentleman?"

"He's in a poem I recited last Christmas at an evening party. The raven sits on an image and says 'Nevermore,' and it gets on the gentleman's nerve to such an extent that he writes a poem about it."

"What a peculiar idea. Not much in it, I should say. But I don't care for poetry, do you?"

"I'm rather fond of it," said Mr. Salter, with the air of a man who makes a damaging admission. "Sometimes I read Shakespeare."

"Not for pleasure surely. But would you call him a poet?"

Mr. Salter considered the question with an open mind as the train passed slowly through Clapham Junction. When it gathered speed again Miss Martin said—

"I suppose they think a lot of Bert at your office?"

"Do you mean because he's working overtime to-night?"

"Yes. I suppose the boss wanted something done in a hurry, and knew Bert was the man."

"It looks like that," said Mr. Salter, in a choked voice.

"Why didn't you stay and help him?"

"I wasn't asked."

"Job you couldn't be trusted with, I'll be bound."

"Have your joke," said Mr. Salter.

Miss Martin saw that she had gone a little too far. She had no desire to quarrel with Mr. Salter. She knew him to be a steady, hard-working man, and she had frequently annoyed Bert by advising him to emulate his friend.

"I suppose you know Bert is going down to Trevalla for Whitsuntide?" she said.

"He's been talking about it," said Mr. Salter.

"He is going to stay with my uncle and aunt there. They used to know his mother."

"Ever been yourself?"

"Never wanted to. It's not a lively place. Bert has a fancy for it because his grandfather lived there, the one he's so proud of."

"He doesn't seem to have done much for Bert."

"First he ran through all his money, then he came back to Trevalla, and married beneath him; then he drank himself to death. Father can tell you all about him. He used to know Bert's mother when she was a girl. In fact, it was through him she met Mr. Gammage and made a respectable marriage. Mr. Gammage was father's fellow-clerk at Johnson's. Bert's mother was not at all cultivated, but she was always talking about her father being a gentleman. Just as if her husband and his friends were not. It made her rather unpleasant to associate with, poor thing."

"Why poor thing?"

"She's been dead two years, you see, and her husband longer still. Bert seems to have no one belonging to him now but us, and, of course, he's not really one of the family."

"You treat him as if he was," said Mr. Salter, enviously.

"Do you often go to the theatre?" said Miss Martin.

"Never. I would, though, if I had Bert's luck, and could prevail on you to come with me."

"It's very awkward about to-night. My brothers are engaged, I know. Of course, there's Daisy, but mother doesn't like us girls coming back across the Common after dark."

"If you'll allow me," said Mr. Salter, "I'll be at the door of the theatre, and see you and Miss Daisy home."

Miss Martin looked thoughtfully out of the window at the River Wandle.

"Daisy has seen this piece," she said. "Dick took her last week."

"Indeed," said Mr. Salter.

"I suppose you wouldn't care to use Bert's ticket?"

"I should consider it a privilege. What time does the performance commence? If you'll allow me, I'll call for you."

"Can't you come on to Barnes and take tea with us?" said Florrie, hastily deciding that if the supplies were short Daisy could be sent for sausages.

"Won't Mrs. Martin think I'm intruding?" said Mr. Salter, looking so happy that Florrie took his demurrer the way it was meant, as a polite form.

The Martins lived in a row of houses that had a charming view of Barnes Common from the back windows. They liked the view very well, but they had taken the house because it had excellent bedrooms and a Lilliputian kitchen. The whole family could be accommodated, and then there was a good room left for a lodger. Moreover, with a kitchen the size of a bathing-machine no one could expect Mrs. Martin to keep a "girl"—a form of misery she strenuously resisted. Her husband and five of her seven children were at work all day. Bobby went to school, and Daisy was getting quite handy about the house. On Sundays, when they were often nine or ten to meals, Mrs. Martin didn't deny there was a bit to do; but, then, Florrie was at home, too, and helped her.

Mr. Salter had been introduced to the Martins

about three weeks ago by Mr. Gammage. He had fallen in love with pretty Florrie on the spot, and more or less with the whole family. They were clever, cheerful, prosperous people. Two of the four elder boys had shown a turn for mechanis, and were earning high wages already with a firm of engineers; Florrie was in the Post Office; the two other boys were with warehousemen, and meant to get on. There are many homes in higher spheres where money is less plentiful and life less comfortably adjusted to the prevailing ideal.

Mrs. Martin met her daughter in the hall, gave Mr. Salter a hearty welcome, and mentioned that something had put it into her head to make veal and ham patties for tea.

"We don't reckon much of supper," she explained to her guest, "my husband and children like a good tea when they get back from their work, and it suits me better too. Not so much late washing up. Come into the dining-room. Daisy, put down that novelette at once and help me bring in tea. Florrie and Mr. Salter won't want to wait. Do you say you've come straight from the office? Then you'll want a brush up. You know your way to Bert's room, don't you?"

Mr. Salter, who lived alone in lodgings, envied Bert when he came down and saw the tidy, cheerful room and well-spread table. Mrs. Martin sat behind a big brown teapot, there was a crusty loaf, a pat of butter, a pile of hot patties, a fresh dripping cake, and a glass dish that held marmalade on one side, and gooseberry jam on the other. As the meal progressed one and another of the family dropped in and by the time Florrie and Mr. Salter had finished, all the young Martins were there chattering like daws, and eating, as their mother said, like ravens.

"Bert is in luck," sighed Mr. Salter, on his way to the theatre.

"To be at the office to-night 'stead of here?"

"To live with you. You know well enough what I mean, Miss Florrie. Half his luck would do me."

"I don't call him lucky," said Florrie. "He doesn't seem to get on. Father's afraid he's idle, but father has a crack on work. He's brought us up to think it's better to be a sweep than a loafer."

"So it is," said Mr. Salter; "my landlady has a cousin who is a master sweep. I once had dinner with him on a Sunday . . . when he wasn't black."

"Sweeps are all right, of course. It's just a way of speaking."

"Yes," said Mr. Salter, "but ever since I met one as it were, in society, it seems hard on sweeps."

"When father doesn't like any one he calls him a duke. It's the same idea. He will have it that Bert's a duke—poor old Bert."

"He'll grow out of it," said Mr. Salter, consolingly. "I thought you said it was twenty minutes from your house to the bridge."

"Well, look at the church clock."

"I'm going by my feelings. Half a minute I should call it if I wanted to be accurate."

Florrie had found the walk a short one, too, but she would not admit it. Altogether the evening passed pleasantly. The play was a melodrama, thrilling from first to last.

"There are some toughs in the world," said Mr. Salter reflectively, as they were walking home. "Funny one never comes across them. The people I know are betwixt and between—same as myself—not very good, and not very bad."

"Look at the things you read in the papers every day, though," said Florrie, "somebody does them."

They walked home, and it was nearly midnight when Florrie bid Mr. Salter a friendly farewell on the doorstep. She let herself in with her latch-key, and was just going upstairs with her candle lighted, when the dining-room door opened, and Mr. Gamage hailed her in a whisper.

"Bert," she said with surprise, "why have you sat up?"

"I wanted to see you. I shan't come back from

the office to-morrow, and you're always off before me in the morning."

"What time did you get home?"

"Not till ten o'clock. They'd done supper."

"Are you hungry?"

"I told your mother I wasn't, but I am now."

Florrie went into the kitchen, and soon returned with a tray holding bread and cheese and a small jug of beer.

"I'm hungry too," she said, helping herself. "So you really are going to Trevalla, Bert?"

"Yes, I'm going."

"What you got the hump about? Think I ought to have stayed at home to-night? Because that's nonsense, and——"

"I'm not jealous of Salter. He's no lady's man. I wonder you persuaded him to go."

"He didn't need much persuasion," said Florrie, indignantly.

"It's my own affairs that trouble me. You see I can't come back with the excursion. That beast Angelo has refused me the extra day. I'll have to come back Monday night and pay my return fare."

"Then you don't gain anything by going with the excursion?"

"Not a penny."

"Why don't you give it up?"

"Because I've made up my mind to go, if it's only to spite Angelo. I'm not weak."

Florrie looked anxiously at the young man's sulky, handsome face. His looks had won her affections, and though no official engagement bound them, yet they had agreed that there should be one when Bert had kept his present post six months. But sometimes of late Florrie had anxiously compared her lover with her brothers, and wondered whether he had their grit; or, indeed, her own. But so far she had not allowed her transient doubts to unsettle her.

"What's the difficulty, Bert?" she said.

"I've run short," said the young man, colouring.

"I've enough for the excursion, and a few shillings over, but I want to borrow a pound for the return fare."

"I'll lend it you if you really want to go," said Florrie, after a moment's pause. "But why don't you wait till August? You'd have a fortnight then, and it would be more worth while."

"I'm going to-morrow," said the young man, obstinately. "If I can't come back in time I'll come by the excursion, and risk it with old Angelo."

"Does he give you extra for working overtime to-night?"

"Not a penny."

"Then why do you do it?"

"It doesn't pay to be disobliging," said Mr. Gammage.

The girl had drawn her purse from her pocket, and taken a sovereign from it. She put it on the table, and got up to go.

"It's awfully good of you, Florrie," said the young man, feeling fully ashamed of himself.

As she went upstairs Florrie tried to imagine Mr. Salter borrowing money from a girl to pay for a jaunt he could not afford. The idea was absurd, and she sighed as she recognized this.

III

IT was the afternoon of Whit Monday, and Miss Julia Martin was getting ready to go with Mr. Gammage to Rockmouth Fair. She rolled her black hair over an immense pad so that it puffed out on either side of her pink and white face. Then she put on a brilliant blue blouse with a transparent collarless yoke, a black skirt, a white belt, and a large burnt-straw hat, trimmed with lace and forget-me-nots. She sprinkled her handkerchief with opoponax, tied on a white veil, took up a blue cotton sunshade, and went downstairs well satisfied. Mr. Gammage felt well satisfied, too, when he beheld her. She was not really what he called "smart," not quite up to the style he was used to on Putney Hill every Sunday

afternoon ; but her complexion was dazzling, her lips were as red as ripe cherries, and her eyes full of artless admiration whenever they met his. This afternoon as she put on her brown kid gloves she asked Mr. Gammage to button them. After the gloves came a hair bracelet, with a clasp she could not manage. As he bent over her wrist she remembered a chapter in "The Prince's Curse," the serial now running in her favourite weekly. The prince had stooped over the Lady Vera's wrist, and had discovered the clue to a murder in the big central ruby of her bracelet. Julia sighed as she reflected that with most of us real life never quite plays the game. Here was a superb young man and here was she, but murders, rubies, princes, all the gorgeous accessories of the scene were wanting.

"Be those real diamonds in your pin?" she asked, fixing her eyes on the horseshoe that ornamented Mr. Gammage's tie.

"They are real Parisian," said Mr. Gammage.

"I'd like some diamonds—or pearls," said Julia, as they strolled along the deep sheltered lane that led from the farmhouse to the high-road. "I'd like a pearl necklace with five rows. Do Cousin Florrie wear much jewellery?"

"She wears a pearl dog-collar on Sundays, and when she goes to dances."

"Do she go to dances in a low dress—like you see in the fashion books?"

"You couldn't well wear anything else about London when you go to a dance—not to look smart."

"Be Florrie smart?"

"Very much so. All her set is, in fact."

"I'd like to come to London and earn thirty shillings a week same as Florrie do," said the girl. "'Tis easy to be smart wi' all that to spend."

"It isn't as much as you'd think," said Mr. Gammage, with feeling, "when you've paid your train fares and your dinners and your board and lodging."

"But, I suppose, you make more than Florrie? A man always can, can't he?"

"Of course, I'm only at the commencement of my career," said Mr. Gammage, flicking at the wild roses in the hedgerow near him. "I'm not wrapt up in the City. Sometimes I think I'll have a dash at Orstralia, like my grandfather."

"When we get past the turn in the road, I'll show 'e the house where your grandfaither was born—what there is left of it."

Mr. Gammage had asked about the house directly he arrived, and had been told of its fallen fortunes. The decaying cliff had crumbled further and further back, until in the course of years it stood so perilously that all men feared to live there. Time, weather, and neglect had brought the place to ruin, and last winter, after weeks of heavy rain, there had been a landslip that carried the greater part of the old buildings with it. The very stones were scattered now, and the tumbling barns and outhouses only gave shelter to flocks of sheep and migratory birds.

"Can't even see what shape and size it was," said Mr. Gammage, feeling disappointed. There was nothing here that he could note with pride and afterwards describe to Mr. Salter. He stood on the grassy edge of the cliff with Julia, and looked at the three broken sides of a roofless barn. Beyond them they saw the sea, and to the east the dangerous headland known as the Devil's Neck.

"You can get to the shore that way," said Julia, pointing to a steep overgrown path wriggling down the face of the cliff.

"Anything to see?"

"No more than here. That big pointed rock sticking out of the sea, with a lot o' little ones near it, be the Coffin Rock. They call this Coffin Bay."

"Pleasant name," said Mr. Gammage.

"If a man gets in the currents near them rocks he goes down like a stone, swimmer or no. An' often their bodies come ashore miles an' miles away."

Mr. Gammage cast an appraising eye at the sea, the sky, and the vast headlands that shut in the bay.

The cliff was as gay as a garden with valerian, gorse, and broom, and the sea-thrift spread like a sunset from rock to rock until the pink sheen of it met the surf of the breakers that came rolling into the bay.

"Let's go on to the fair," said Mr. Gammage. "We've seen this."

Another half-hour took them to Rockmouth and the noisy rout there. Directly they reached the crowd Julia met some friends, and introduced her London beau, of whom she felt extremely proud. He did not speak or behave in a countrified way, and his clothes had a town cut that she admired. But when she saw that he had made an impression on the Green girls she contrived to separate from them again.

"I'm glad you managed that," said Mr. Gammage. "It is nice by ourselves."

He had arrived at Trevalla after midnight on Saturday, and he had spent the whole long, sleepy Sunday in Julia's company. He had escorted her to church and back through quiet lanes; he had loafed away the afternoon with her on the shore; and when they came back to tea, they still had the evening hours before them. These they spent in the garden, and by the time they went to bed it had got to kisses snatched and perfunctorily denied.

Mr. Gammage knew that he was acting the gay deceiver, but in such cases every step forward makes it harder to recede. When a girl has tempting lips that you kiss overnight, can you disclaim them next morning? When the glamour of a summer evening has invoked a whispered "darling," have you the effrontery to try a colder address by day? Mr. Gammage did try it, and felt like a brute. The girl's eyes met his with such disappointment and chagrin. She was a much more emotional girl than her cousin Florrie, he found; quicker to respond, less critical, less determined, and it must be said, less self-respecting. He would have felt uneasy if he had not reflected that to-night must end the whole matter. His little bag had been sent to Rockmouth station by one of the

farm carts that morning, and at nine o'clock his train left for London. Julia was to see him off, and to return to Trevalla with friends. For the next few hours, therefore, he might as well please his companion and himself.

Julia was easily pleased. She liked little penny necklaces made of shells and beads; and flails of coloured paper; and fancy gingerbread; and all the side shows. Mr. Gammage had come to the fair with fifteen shillings over and above the sovereign lent him by Florrie for his return journey, but eight of these were soon spent. When he only had one available shilling left, he wished he had never come to the fair. He had not known it would involve so much treating. He looked about anxiously for a tent where they would charge sixpence a head for tea, and he remembered that it must be his last meal till to-morrow morning. The twenty-six shillings left would just pay his railway fare, get his bag from the cloakroom, and, after a meagre early breakfast, take him from Paddington to the City to-morrow morning.

"What's wrong with 'e?" said Julia, noticing that he had turned glum.

"It's that clock," said Mr. Gammage. "I never heard such a clock. It won't leave you alone."

"'Tis the Town Hall clock," said Julia. "Maybe you'd like to have a look at the town."

"I shouldn't mind," said Mr. Gammage. "We'll have tea first. Here we are. That little table in the corner looks nice. Isn't there a quiet place anywhere near—with seats and trees—like last night—where we could say good-bye? I'm tired of the fair."

This suggestion made its appeal to Julia as strongly as Mr. Gammage could wish, and she hurried through tea without asking for extras, as he had feared she might. They walked through the town together, and then Julia led the way to a secluded corner of Rockmouth Park.

"When will 'e come to see us again?" she said, trying to seem unconscious that Mr. Gammage had absently settled himself on the seat with his arm round her waist.

He would come as soon as he could, he said, and talked vaguely of a fortnight's holiday in August. Julia said August was a long way off, and why didn't her Aunt Jenny invite her to stay at Barnes? She supposed her fine London cousins would think her countrified. This naturally paved the way for some pretty speeches that passed imperceptibly into love-making. No one was in sight or hearing. The distant hullabaloo of the fair only emphasized the silence of this lonely spot, where the branches of great trees met overhead and made deep shade. It grew chilly as evening fell, but the two absorbed young people did not notice this, nor did they notice the Town Hall clock as it struck the flying hour. There was just light enough for Mr. Gammage to see Julia's melting eyes, and full white throat; for her to see the lover of her dreams—not a yokel like the others—not coarse and stammering and country bred—but a man of the world, easy of speech, free with his money, large in his ideas. He had just said that when he married he would not allow his wife to spoil her pretty hands with housework. He would wish her to wear pretty blouses, and sit in the drawing-room all day. Julia, who was lazy by temperament, liked the picture. But, just as she was about to say so, the Town Hall clock struck the third quarter after eight, and Mr. Gammage jumped to his feet as if he had been stung.

"How far is it to the station from here?" he said.

"I doan't know," said Julia, rather offended by this sudden change of tone.

"But you know the way . . . and I have my bag to get. Come along. Never mind all that rubbish."

Julia was gathering together her fairings, and did not hurry as much as Mr. Gammage wished.

"Would it matter if you miss the train?" she asked.

"I should lose my berth. That's all."

"But you said you didn't care much for it."

Mr. Gammage hardly answered. He was walking at a great pace, breathless and anxious. She did

not understand what the future looked like to her lover if he missed this train; but she suffered from the revulsion of feeling that thrust her from him. He was running now, and she could hardly keep up with him. When at last they reached the main street leading to the station, the stitch in her side was so painful that she fell back panting. Mr. Gammage looked over his shoulder at her, but did not slacken his speed. His face startled her, it looked so pale and hunted, and as the first stroke of nine boomed over the town from the Town Hall clock she stood still uncertainly. He had reached the station-yard now, but she was still about a hundred yards from it. After a moment's hesitation, however, she went on. It was three minutes past the hour when she entered the booking-office and saw Mr. Gammage in violent altercation with two of the railway officials. She knew at once that he had lost his train.

"Stopped me at the barrier to ask for my ticket when the train was on the move. It's infamous. That's the only word for it—infamous!"

But in an argument like this the officials easily had the best of it. They threatened to turn Mr. Gammage neck and crop out of the station; and, if he didn't go quietly, to charge him with trying to defraud the company.

"I did think of going back first-class," he said in an impressive way to Julia; "but I find the next train would be of no use to me. I may just as well wait for the excursion to-morrow. I must telegraph to the office."

"Then you'll come back with me to-night?" said Julia.

He got his little black bag out of the cloak-room, sent off his telegram, and then went with Julia into Rockmouth High Street again. They agreed to walk home by the cliff path ahead of the crowd returning from the fair. Mr. Gammage had partly recovered his spirits. The thought of the twenty-four shillings that need not now be used for a railway ticket consoled

acc. no. 258

LIBRARY

him. He had spent one shilling on his telegram, which he had made very full and apologetic, and which he hoped might pacify Mr. Angelo. Anyway he was not going to spoil the present hour by looking forward to the worst. He had money in his pocket, a pretty girl on his arm, and a clear sky overhead. He sauntered up the High Street, and stopped of his own accord at a small fancy shop, one of the few not closed on Bank Holiday. Julia pointed to some pearl necklaces in the window.

"Is that the same as Florrie wears?" she asked.

"Florrie bought hers in Oxford Street," said Mr. Gammage. "You wouldn't get the same thing here. But these are not bad."

"I think they'm lovely," said Julia, with a sigh.

So Mr. Gammage went into the shop and bought her one that cost five shillings. As he clasped it round her throat she reproached him for his extravagance, but her eyes promised him kisses when they should be by themselves again.

"I am glad you missed your train," she said later.

They had arrived at the ruins of the old Blois house by this time, and Mr. Gammage had just told Julia she was the girl he really loved.

"I am glad to be here," said Mr. Gammage.

"Shall we tell faither and mother to-night or to-morrow?"

"Tell them what?"

"That we'm keepin' company."

"Shouldn't have thought it needed much tellin'. They've both got eyes, haven't they?"

"Prissy Gannet was married in white muslin," the lady continued pensively. "I've set my heart on white silk ever since. Which do 'e like best for a bride? Prissy Gannet was our cowman's daughter, and mother said it was ridiculous. It was all along of her going out to service and getting her head full of nonsense. When shall we get married, Bert? I'm sick of Trevalla."

"Let's get home now," said the young man without ardour. "I call it cold."

IV

WHILE Mr. Gammage sat at a late breakfast with Julia next morning, the postman delivered two letters, one for each of them. They had both been posted on Saturday from Barnes. Julia's letter was from her cousin Florrie, and as she read it she smiled and glanced across the table at Mr. Gammage, impatient to share her pleasure with him. But he was reading his letter with fixed eyes and a scowling frown.

It was from Mr. Salter, and ran as follows:—

“ 350, Norroy Road, Putney.

“ *Saturday.*

“ DEAR BERT,

“ I hope you had a pleasant journey and are doing yourself well. This is to inform you of an occurrence that took place at the office this afternoon, about five minutes after you left to catch your train. The Italian mail arrived and brought the boss tidings of your last little game. What a chap you are! You remember that bill of exchange for a hundred pounds on Filippo Bellini at Naples? I myself heard the boss tell you the name of the bank you were to send it to. Instead of which you stuck it in an envelope and posted it to Mr. Bellini himself, who says now he never got it, and never heard of such a document, and could not dream of paying it. The boss says he will never see that hundred pounds now. He was so pleased! I never heard a finer flow of language on the towing-path.

“ Seriously, old man, if I was you I would have a dash at that dog-cart—or else Australia, only I don't know how you'll get there. I wouldn't come back to Wood Street. It isn't good enough. Angelo says he won't recommend you to any one, and won't give you more than fifteen shillings a week himself. I pointed out that you could not live on fifteen shillings a week, but he said plenty of better men did, and it

would do you good to try. Of course, he was not in a reasonable mood, but the question is, will he be any better by Tuesday morning? I often wonder why all the employment of the world is in the hands of beasts. There is no doubt that it is so. I have not said anything at Barnes, nor do I intend to. I thought you would probably treat the episode as a matter of business, and not mention it to our mutual friends.

"Yours sincerely,

"JAMES SALTER"

"I have such a nice letter from London," said Julia, joyfully.

"So have I," said Mr. Gammage.

"They want me to go."

"Same here. At least it amounts to that."

"Well, you'm going to-day, bain't you? and I'm going with 'e, if I can get over faither, that is."

"What?" said Mr. Gammage, his mouth and eyes remaining wide open in his astonishment.

"This letter is from Florrie. She says they suddenly had the idea that I'd never been to see them, and why shouldn't I seize the opportunity and travel back with you—yesterday. They thought we'd get these letters yesterday. My stars! you never telegraphed to tell them you'd missed your train. Were they going to sit up for 'e half the night?"

"No. The train wasn't to get in till nearly five. I meant to have breakfast and a nap in a waiting-room and go straight to the office."

"They wouldn't be frightened, then?"

"Florrie will guess to-night that I am coming back by the excursion. She's a girl with all her wits about her."

"I'll be jealous of her if 'e don't take care," said Julia.

"Of course you can't come off all of a sudden like this," said Mr. Gammage.

"Why not?"

"You want a lot more clothes in London than you do here . . . different ones. They'd be taking you about to Earl's Court and the Crystal Palace and theatres. You've no idea how extensively ladies dress in those places."

"I doan't doubt it," said Julia, "that's why I want to see 'em. Living down to Trevalla you get no ideas. I suppose I'll want a few new clothes before long."

Mr. Gammage began to think the young lady rather forward. He had not once alluded to their marriage, but she seemed unable to open her mouth without doing so.

"What's your letter about?" she said, trying to snatch it from him. She had these playful ways.

"It's private business," said Mr. Gammage, putting it into his pocket.

The girl pouted, allowed herself to be pacified, and then suddenly got up.

"I must catch faither. I can hear him in the yard," she said.

In five minutes, while Mr. Gammage was still looking at Mr. Salter's letter for the second time, she came back again.

"'Tis all right," she said. "I've got my pig, and faither says if I be fool enough to spend it this way he can't stop me. Faither's a comical-tempered man, bain't he?"

"I've hardly seen him," said Mr. Gammage, who had not exchanged a dozen words with his surly host since his arrival.

"He cheered up, though, when I told him I should soon be off his hands."

Mr. Gammage sighed lugubriously. He was just going to ask Julia how a pig would help her to get to London when she ran out of the room again. As she did so her mother came in. She was a good-natured rather simple woman, of ample proportions, lazy, garrulous, and sentimental. It was she who had sent the invitation to Mr. Gammage and who had always wished to keep up some connection with the prosperous

London cousins. When Mr. Gammage arrived, she felt sure that she had done a clever thing, and when she saw the impression on him made by Julia, she rejoiced greatly, poor woman! Last night and this morning Julia's high spirits as well as her hints sufficiently revealed the position of affairs. There was an understanding between her girl and her guest that would shortly take the form of a betrothal, and in due time of a marriage. She did not trouble herself about the young man's prospects. His black coat, his soft hands, his good looks and his town-bred ways, all made a strong appeal to her imagination. Julia's father could be trusted to deal with the practical side of affairs, and to make himself as disagreeable as his duty by his child prescribed. Meanwhile, the adventurous invitation had brought pleasant fruit already. Here was Julia as good as engaged to a young man she could truthfully describe as a perfect gentleman, and here was this invitation from the London cousins who had hitherto not troubled much about their relations at Trevalla. She began to clear away the breakfast things, talking nineteen to the dozen as she did so, and explaining that this sudden turn in Julia's affairs made them both so busy that they hardly knew whether they were on their heads or their heels. Julia, she said, had gone off to borrow her Aunt Susan's tin trunk, because there was no newer luggage in the house than the carpet-bag Mrs. Martin's father had bought for his wedding-jaunt fifty years ago.

"Julia said they'd laugh at it in London," she babbled on, "and she thought you wouldn't like that. She's in a taking about her clothes too, poor maid! I tell her they won't beat her eyes and her skin in London, and when it comes to courtin'——"

Mrs. Martin paused to let Mr. Gammage make the obvious rejoinder, but it was not forthcoming. He sat by a window crowded with geraniums and other flowering plants, and he looked most dejected. But Mrs. Martin did not notice this. She clattered in and out of the room, and was presently joined by her

daughter equally elated and equally blind to their guest's depression.

"If you want a walk this morning, you'll have to go by yourself," said Julia to him. "I've a frock to iron and a hat to trim and my blue blouse to mend. 'Twill take me all my time to be ready and packed up by four o'clock. We must leave at a quarter-past latest."

"You really mean to come then," said Mr. Gammage, rousing himself a little.

"I'd like to know why you don't want me," said the girl with quick angry suspicion. "I'm coming all the same. It's too big a bit of fun to miss; but I just wonder why you're against it."

"I'm neither against it nor for it," said Mr. Gammage. "If you put it like that—it's no concern of mine."

"Just what I think. It's early days for you to be interferin'——"

"Oh, if you want to make a quarrel of it——"

"I doan't," said the girl, going up to the young man and perching on his knee; "but can't 'e see I'm mad to go to London—with you too—and no bidding each other good-bye? Seems as if you were set on spoiling my pleasure."

"I don't want to spoil any one's pleasure, I'm sure," protested Mr. Gammage; "there isn't too much pleasure knocking about for most of us, and we may as well take it as it comes. But what'll your father say if he catches you sitting on my knee, Julia? I can hear his voice in the kitchen."

"Why doan't you tell him—what you told me last night?"

"Because I'd rather wait a bit. I've a letter in my pocket this very minute that may make a considerable difference to my prospects."

"Let's see it," said Julia.

But Mr. Gammage again resisted the young lady's curiosity, and in the course of a playful and lively struggle he managed to free himself and to rise to his feet.

"I'm going out," he said.

"That's what I came in about—to ask if you'd mind walking as far as Rockmouth. You see, Florrie asks me to telegraph, and we can't nearer than Rockmouth. She thought I'd get her letter yesterday in time to travel with you if you hadn't missed your train."

"I may as well walk to Rockmouth as anywhere else, I suppose," said Mr. Gammage; and when Julia had escorted him to the garden gate he got away.

It was a brilliant summer morning and the sea danced and sparkled in the sunshine. Though the cliff where he walked was high, he could hear the lap of little waves on the shore, and in some places he could see the shore and the surf breaking on it in a froth. The fresh salt breeze mingled with the strong scent of thyme growing in great clumps near the path, and with the honied perfume of gorse flowering for miles inland. All the skylarks in the country seemed to be singing to-day, and the blue of the heavens was as clear and deep as the blue of those western seas.

But the beauty of his surroundings could not console poor Mr. Gammage, and as he went on his spirits sank until it seemed to him that his very body was affected by his mental trouble, for he felt sick and cold and tremulous. He could not see any way of escape, and he did not know how to face his difficulties. He certainly had made that little mistake with the bill of exchange. He remembered being uncertain where he ought to send it, and deciding that it was less bother to use the name on the bill than to inquire. Of course, it was outrageous to suppose he was going to live on fifteen shillings a week. Fifteen shillings a week meant what? At best a cubicle in a Rowton House, at worst some dirty attic and semi-starvation. Yet if Mr. Angelo refused to speak for him he might find even fifteen shillings a week beyond him, and be walking the streets soon, one of the unemployed. He had heard many a grisly story of the straits to which men thrown out of employment are sometimes reduced, men with neither means nor friends. Billy

Saunders had once been a clerk with a decent coat to his back and a decent roof to his head ; and only a week ago in a cold wind and a driving rain Mr. Gammage had met him pacing the Strand as a sandwich man. The poor fellow's miserable clothes, his unshaven face, his look of hollow-eyed despair came back to Mr. Gammage now, the spectre of a fate that might await him.

The Martins at Barnes had stood his friends ever since his mother died, but would they stand his friends now when Julia had told her story ? It was more likely that Florrie's father and brothers would unite to turn him out of the house. His "understanding" with Florrie had been an open secret in the family, and though the father did not approve of him he would not tamely see his daughter jilted. As Mr. Gammage swung disconsolately along the cliff path he wished he could walk like this until he had walked right away from Julia and away from his old life which had become unmanageable. The more he thought of it the more impossible it seemed to go back to Barnes in Julia's company, and endure the scorn of both girls when his fickleness became known. And, thought the young man miserably, if Julia went on in her uncle's house as she did at the farm everything would be known the first five minutes. She would probably sit on his knee and tweak his ear before Florrie's very eyes.

Mr. Gammage had arrived now at the ruins of the old Blois house, and he halted there, looking about him at the shattered remains of his ancestors' homestead, and thinking that if his ancestors had been men of a different calibre their descendant would not be standing between the devil and the deep sea to-day. As he stood there his eye was caught by the top of the winding path that led down the face of the cliff to the shore. Yesterday it had looked steep and forbidding, to-day he felt tempted to try it. If he fell and broke his neck so much the better, he thought, as he slipped on the loose sand of the first few yards. But he clutched at some coarse grass and saved himself, and then continued the descent with greater care. At one place

he found it easier to turn round, and with his face to the cliff slither down on his hands and knees. There he came to the end of the path where the cliff and the house had fallen together some months ago. The landslip formed a huge mound that the sea thrift and the bramble had fastened on already, and would soon completely cover; and it was easy here to pick a way right down to the shore. At least, it would have been easy for any one used to country walks and rough ground. But Mr. Gammage soon found himself in an awkward place. He had come to the very edge of the landslip where the sea had undermined it, and as he stood there wondering in what way he could reach the shore the grass-grown earth supporting him gave way, and he fell headlong on the sand, with a crash of soil and rock about him: just as one winter night the old Blois house had fallen with a greater crash and a completer ruin.

Mr. Gammage was not hurt—only dazed for a moment—so dazed that as he picked himself up and saw a half-dressed man come towards him he rubbed his eyes to rub away the terror that overcame him. He thought the shock of the fall had affected his brain. He did not know what to think. He leaned against the cliff and stared and shivered while he himself, as he saw himself day by day in the glass, came towards him, too solid for an apparition, too impossibly like for anything else.

"It's all this worry," thought poor Mr. Gammage. "My brain's turned, and no wonder."

"Keep off," he shrieked, and he put his hands before his eyes and tried to wriggle closer to the cliff; but in spite of his panic he wondered why his ghost, if this was his ghost, appeared without a coat, and in trousers of a superior make and pattern.

The figure continued to advance.

"I saw you fall," it said in a pleasant voice. "Have you hurt yourself?"

Mr. Gammage took his hands from his face, and saw the stranger blanch and check at sight of him.

The sun had been in the young man's face as he came forward, and he had not seen Mr. Gammage clearly until now.

"We have met ourselves," he said. "I always wondered what the people in the picture felt like. Now I know."

"I wish I had two penn'orth of brandy," said Mr. Gammage.

The two men gazed at each other fascinated. They were the same height, the same make, the same colour; feature for feature their faces were bewilderingly alike. The stranger's eyes were alive and the self-made lines about his mouth, the lines that give character, gave him strength and refinement. But at first sight these subtle differences were not so apparent as the extraordinary and unaccountable resemblance.

"I was never told of a long-lost twin brother," murmured the stranger.

"I never had a brother at all," said Mr. Gammage.

"My name is Roger Blois," said the stranger.

Mr. Gammage allowed his lower jaw to drop and his eyes to grow round with astonishment.

"I hope I never do that," thought the other man, as he watched him.

"My grandfather was Peter Blois," said Mr. Gammage.

"Then we must be second cousins," said Roger.

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"MY grandfather had a brother. He was Roger Blois. They went to Orstralia together more than fifty years ago," said Mr. Gammage.

"Yes," said Roger; "mine stayed out there and yours came back to the old country."

"Worse luck," said Mr. Gammage.

The two men sat down together, and though they had only been in each other's company for a few minutes, their voices, their movements, and even their clothes, said much their tongues would never say about the years that brought them like and unlike to this co-

counter. Roger recognized his cousin's cockney twang, for it was like the twang of the uneducated Australian; he saw, too, that Mr. Gammage's clothes were shoddy, and his manner subtly common. He did not mean to let these discoveries prejudice him, but he could no more help making them than he could help perceiving the sea.

"You don't live here?" he said.

"I live in London. At least, I work in London, and sleep in a suburb, like most of us."

Roger tried to piece together scraps of talk about this man's grandfather, heard years ago and half forgotten. He knew that Peter Blois had gone to the dogs and made an ill-assorted marriage when he got there, but he had not known there were children of the marriage.

"Your grandfather lived about here, didn't he?" he began tentatively. "I suppose his children——"

"Never had but one—my mother," said Mr. Gammage.

"Then your name isn't Blois?"

"My name is Gammage—Erbert Gammage. My father was a Londoner, and a clerk like me. He came down for a holiday, same as I have now, and met my mother and married her. She was an only child. So am I."

"Are you making a long stay here now?"

"Goin' back to-day by the five-o'clock excursion—unless anything turns up. Where are you?"

"In Rockmouth, at the Swan. I only arrived last night on the *Electric*. I thought I'd have a look at the old Blois house before going on."

"Funny," said Mr. Gammage, "I'm here on the same errand. We've come a long way for nothing."

"Well, we have found each other," said Roger.

Mr. Gammage was picking up little stones and throwing them towards the sea. He turned with one poised in his hand and looked at his cousin.

"It is a rum start," he said. "I don't believe our own mothers would have known us apart . . . until we opened our mouths."

"My parents are dead," said Roger.

"So are mine," said Mr. Gammage. He stared gloomily at the sea, threw the stone in his hand towards it, and picked up another. He did not throw well.

"I'm going on to stay with Colonel Blois at Grey-marsh," said Roger. "He is the last of his family, it seems—the last male, that is."

"I've seen his name in the papers," said Mr. Gammage. "He has an only daughter, called Pamela. Her portrait was in *The Smart World* not so long ago. I bought it, as she was a connection. She's a daisy, I should say, judging by that. Are you going to live in England now?"

"Yes," said Roger.

"Wish I could get out of it—the sooner the better. I suppose your grandfather was luckier than mine?"

"Yes, he prospered," said Roger, speaking in this temperate way of the considerable fortune amassed by his grandfather and handed on with increase to him.

"When I saw you come across the sand in your shirt-sleeves I thought I'd gone dotty. Were you just going to bathe?"

"Yes, I want to swim."

"They say it's dangerous over there—near those pointed rocks. Coffin Rock they call the big one."

"I'm a good swimmer. Are you?"

"Branch of my education that was neglected," said Mr. Gammage, trying to speak cheerfully. He had got tired of his stones, and was now biting a blade of grass. The shock of his fall and the excitement of meeting his cousin had driven his troubles from his mind for the moment, but now the weight of them began to oppress him again. "I suppose you can ride and shoot, and do everything?" he said to Roger. "Seen a lot, haven't you? Lived a man's life out there. Not like me—sitting at a blighted desk all day—in a blighted office. Plenty of kicks, precious few halfpence, and the cemetery when you've finished. I'd be a dog any day sooner than a London clerk."

Roger had pulled his coat towards him, and taken

his tobacco-pouch from it. He offered this now to Mr. Gammage and watched him fill a pipe with a quick, nervous pressure of his fingers that showed inward excitement. He observed, too, that the clerk's hands were not well kept, but that they were hands unused to outdoor work.

"We must talk it over," he said. "I am going on by the three-o'clock express. Will you dine with me to-morrow night at eight?"

"I'd like to," said Mr. Gammage hesitatingly.

"I shall be at the Metropole."

"Don't see how I can, then."

"Why not?"

"Got no dress clothes."

"That doesn't matter," said Roger. "I won't dress either. I will expect you then at eight."

Mr. Gammage felt that for the present the interview was ended. He got up.

"If I want that swim I must have it," said Roger. "I've ordered lunch for one."

"It's twelve now," said Mr. Gammage, looking at his watch, and then beginning the ascent of the cliff.

At first he felt cheerful and excited. If Roger Blois would pay his passage to Australia, Mr. Gammage could snap his fingers at the London office and Mr. Angelo. He liked the prospect, but he did not want a hard struggle for life when he got there. He had heard stories of men going out there and being badly buffeted about, reduced to beggary, glad of rough fare, and forced to hard toil. These stories buzzed through his brain now and sapped his hopes. He had made up his mind that he wanted to be a traveller, not a Stanley or a Livingstone, of course, but one who drives about in a brougham full of little cardboard boxes. It did not strike him that the men entrusted with this comfortable job had qualifications he had never tried to acquire himself. But he wondered whether Roger could help him to a berth of this kind, or would maintain him till one "turned up." For Mr. Gam-

mage was one of those people who know what they want, and blame the stars because they don't get it. They never blame themselves.

But even a sensational description of Roger and the announcement of his own departure would hardly deaden the effect of Julia's story told, as she was bound to tell it, directly she arrived at Barnes. That bad quarter of an hour awaited him at the end of the day, and the thought of it pursued Mr. Gammage with the increasing misery of a nightmare. When the cliff path took him to a point from which he could see the Coffin Rock, he turned and looked at it, seeking for his cousin's head in the water, and after a time finding it some distance out from the shore. He tried to draw a little cheerfulness from the sight of the man who might help him, and as if he would close one unpleasant chapter then and there, he took Mr. Salter's letter from his pocket, glanced at it again, tore it to pieces, and allowed the pieces to scatter in the breeze. He had made up his mind that he would not return to the office at all if he could help it, and assuredly not until after his interview with Roger Blois.

The streets of Rockmouth were fuller than they had been yesterday, when most people were at the fair. The streets had a busier aspect, the shops were all open, and there was a knot of people at the door of the Swan, the chief hotel of the town. As he passed it some one who looked like the landlord, and was just going up the front steps, caught sight of Mr. Gammage and touched his hat. For a moment the clerk was puzzled, and then, with a thrill of pleasure, he realized that he had been mistaken for his cousin. This little incident made so strong an appeal to him that on his return from the post-office he stopped at a hairdresser's and had his hair cut: for he had noticed that Roger wore his clipped short. When the hairdresser had finished, the resemblance was certainly amazing. Nearly three days of strong sea air and sunshine had given Mr. Gammage the tan a sea voyage had given his cousin, and as he looked in

the glass he hoped that time and good luck would bring him Roger's air of prosperity.

He walked slowly away from the town and took the cliff path again, expecting every moment to meet Roger Blois there. He met no one, however, but a couple of children, and when he asked them if a gentleman had passed them, they stared and could not be persuaded to speak. He felt sure his cousin would not walk back by the high-road, which was dull and dusty and some way inland; and he did not think he could have missed him on the path. So when he got to the old Blois house again he sat down waiting for Roger to appear. For if they met again, who could tell? Some word might be spoken that would help Mr. Gammage more promptly than an interview postponed till to-morrow night. The intervening hours hung heavy with trouble in front of him, and he felt ready to seize at any way of escape. He had not been persistent enough this morning, he had not confessed how urgent was his need. While he waited he thought of all he might have said and would say now. But Roger did not come.

When Mr. Gammage looked at his watch it was twenty to two, more than an hour and a half since he had parted from his cousin. He began to feel hungry, and to remember that Julia had said they dined at half-past twelve, but that he could have a snack at any time. He got up and walked about a hundred yards towards the farm. Then he stopped short, his eyes watching the sea, his thoughts busy. He might have missed Roger in the streets of Rockmouth, but it was not likely. He reckoned that his kinsman should have arrived there just as he left the hairdresser's shop. The more he thought of it the more anxious he felt to see him again, and to make more of the second encounter than he had done of the first. Even the loan of five pounds would enable Mr. Gammage to repay Florrie and leave the house with some shreds of self-respect. What would five pounds be to a cousin who could afford to stay at the Metropole? The thought

of the note, crisp and crackling in his pocket, spurred Mr. Gammage to further effort. He turned back, and began to descend the cliff again. If this failed he thought he would walk straight back to Rockmouth, and find Roger at the Swan. When he came to the ragged edge of the landslip where he had fallen that morning, he went very cautiously, trying it step by step, and jumping from a firm bit of rock at the bottom. He arrived safely on the shore this time, and stood there shading his eyes and searching the sea. He was trying to find his cousin in the water again, because at his feet, heaped carelessly together, lay Roger's clothes.

VI

FOR some time Mr. Gammage stood there shading his eyes with his hands and trying to find his cousin's head bobbing in the sea. But he could find nothing between the horizon and the shore except the Coffin Rock and the smaller rocks that lifted their wicked heads from the water around it. There was not a sail within sight now, or the smoke of a steamer, and except for the lap of little waves the silence was profound. On either side of Mr. Gammage, great headlands stood out to sea, shutting from him every homestead, every tilled field, every sign of human life. If help was wanted it would take time to fetch, but after such a lapse of time could help avail? Mr. Gammage stood there, searching, doubting, horror-stricken. Then his knees gave way beneath him, and he sank beside the empty clothes. He had read of death's tragedies without concern, but the reality had never before unnerved him. He trembled, he swore beneath his breath, and his first thoughts were of pity.

"Pore beggar!" he murmured. "Pore beggar! I told him about that blasted rock; I told him plain."

He looked dazedly at his watch. It was more than an hour and a half now since he had turned at the point and watched his cousin in the water. There could be no possible doubt of what had happened.

Roger Blois had trusted to his own strength and distrusted the warning of his town-bred cousin. He had ventured too far, he had been sucked in by the current, and he had sank, as Julia said men did, "like a stone." His body might never be recovered. His clothes . . . Mr. Gammage looked at them. He took the coat into his hands.

At first pity and horror had so stirred him that he had forgotten himself, and the hopes his cousin's death dashed to the ground. There was no deliverance for him now. He stood where he had despairingly stood this morning before the strange encounter with Roger had given him a new hold on life. As his spirit quailed at the thought of the morrow and its miseries, his eye fell on a slightly bulging pocket inside the coat he still held in his hands. He took out a leather pocket-book, opened it, and saw a sheaf of English banknotes, just such a pile as his fancy had seen when he made up his mind to borrow one from his cousin. He opened them, and folded them again, and put them back. He had never stolen anything.

Yet before his hand had left the pocket a thought flashed into his mind that turned him dizzy. At first he rejected it as absurd, beyond his courage, beyond his wits, beyond his "cheek," as he put it to himself. But the idea returned persistently, and he began to question his own scruples. Roger was dead. You can't harm the dead. You can't really steal from them, but only from their heirs. Roger probably had no heirs. He had said he was unmarried and an only child. Perhaps Mr. Gammage was his heir-at-law! It really seemed possible when he came to think of it, but only remotely possible, and not a chance to trust. Anyhow he must not stop to think. If he meant to act he must act quickly. Roger had said he was leaving by the three-o'clock train, and Mr. Gammage, though he had not looked far ahead, yet saw that the sooner he got out of Rockmouth the better. He knew that no one could see him from the top of the cliff. In great haste and with every nerve in his body unhinged, he

got into his cousin's clothes. His own he left in a heap on the shore.

Half an hour later he was in Rockmouth, at the door of the Swan. He went boldly up the steps, and into the hall, which at that moment was empty. But as he put his foot on the stairs a waiter came out of the dining-room and accosted him.

"Shall you require lunch, sir?" he said. "You ordered it at one, but it's going on for half-past two, now?"

"I know," said Mr. Gammage, speaking as a man does in a violent hurry. "I've been detained, and I have to catch the three-o'clock train."

"The station 'bus will be here at 2.45, sir."

"Send me up some sandwiches, will you? It's all I've time for. Oh, and my bill. I've got to hustle."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Gammage hesitated for an instant, and then went on. He had hoped the man would mention the number of his room, but he had not dared to ask him. Now he was at the top of the stairs, and saw narrow corridors in three directions. He walked straight ahead, hoping for a chambermaid, but no one was about. Then he gingerly opened a door and found a cupboard full of pails and brushes. As he shut it, two maids came giggling round a corner and nearly ran against him.

"Well I never!" said one. "Do you want anything out of that cupboard, sir?"

"I've lost my way," said Mr. Gammage. "These confounded corridors are all alike."

"You're close to No. 26, sir," said the girl, and threw back a door just opposite.

"I've just ten minutes to pack and eat my lunch," said Mr. Gammage. "I wish you'd help me."

"With the lunch?"

"With the packing, my dear. Five bob if you'll do it for me."

He went into the room, followed by the maid who had spoken to him. His first impression was one of surprise. There were none of the big trunks he had

expected. He saw a leathern cabin trunk, some toilet necessities and a dressing-case on the dressing-table, a few clothes flung carelessly on the sofa, and that was all. He opened a wardrobe and found nothing but a light great-coat hanging there. As he turned from it a waiter came into the room with a tray. Mr. Gammage saw that his bill was on the tray, and he gave it to the man with a five-pound note for change. The housemaid had hurriedly left the room when the waiter arrived, but now she reappeared.

"Look sharp, my dear," said Mr. Gammage, "I've only five minutes."

The girl glanced at him curiously. He was eating with voracity, and he spoke with his mouth full. His manner was familiar, and his speech had hoarse tones she did not remember in the speech of the dignified gentleman who had occupied this room last night. However, the manners of her master's guests were not her business, and she proceeded with her packing. She finished the trunk first, leaving room at the top for the dressing-case. Then she collected the things on the toilet-table and stopped to shake a slim glass bottle apparently full of scent.

"What's this?" she asked.

"I've no——" began Mr. Gammage, and stopped himself. "Try it," he said instead.

The girl unscrewed the top of the bottle, poured some of its contents on her apron, and sniffed at it.

"It isn't scent at all," she cried indignantly. "It's doctor's stuff . . . it smells of peppermint. What do you use it for?"

"To drink," said Mr. Gammage, coolly.

"You are a funny gentleman," said the girl; "as distant as a duke last night, and that affable to-day, . . . and your voice sounds different too. . . . Why, when I came in about those collars . . . there now . . . if I haven't clean forgotten. . . . What'll you do?"

"What do you think?" said Mr. Gammage.

"You'd better leave your address, and I'll see they're sent on."

"Right you are," said Mr. Gammage, mentally resolving to do nothing of the kind. He had not looked far into the future yet, but he thought the more completely Rockmouth lost sight of him the safer it would be.

"They'll be five shillings and postage," said the girl.

"Five shillings for washing a few collars," said Mr. Gammage, who guessed at a laundry bill.

"How much do you pay for a clean collar where you come from?"

"A penny."

"Well! I suppose you know how many you sent?"

"You talk too much," said Mr. Gammage, getting up and locking the dressing-case. His own coolness surprised and pleased him, but it was the coolness of extreme excitement. He put half a sovereign in the chambermaid's hands and told her to pay the washerwoman and keep the change. As he did so the waiter appeared with the receipted bill, and behind him came the boots for the luggage. Mr. Gammage tipped both men, and got out of the room without leaving his address, which was what he meant to do. But in the hall the landlord intercepted him.

"How many pieces of heavy luggage had you, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Gammage started and stared at the loaded top of the omnibus.

"They're all up there right enough," he said at a venture, and tried to hurry past his host, looking at his watch as he did so, and observing that he mustn't lose his train.

"Plenty of time, sir," said the landlord. "I just want to know whether the grey wooden trunk with brass nails belongs to you or to the American gentleman who arrived with you?"

For a moment Mr. Gammage felt in a tight place, but the real need of hurry helped him.

"Send it on, send it on," he spluttered, "I can't wait for one trunk. I thought I saw it up there."

"It is up there," said the landlord, "but if it doesn't belong to you it must come down."

"Of course it belongs to me," said Mr. Gammage, nipping into the omnibus and shutting the door.

"He didn't seem drunk," said the landlord pensively to his wife. "I hope it's all right about that trunk, because he's left no address behind."

"So Mary has just told me," said the landlady, "and five dozen collars gone to the wash for him. I wonder what shape they are?"

Meanwhile Mr. Gammage found himself in the omnibus with an elegant looking middle-aged woman who had apparently come to England in the same ship as his kinsman. She addressed him as Mr. Blois, and asked him how he had spent his morning.

"I went for a walk," said Mr. Gammage, feeling very fidgety, and staring as much as possible out of the window.

"What became of you at lunch? I waited nearly an hour and then——"

"I'm very sorry. I met a friend, and we got talking, and I suppose the time slipped away."

"I thought you didn't know a soul in England?"

"I don't—rightly speaking. This man turned up unexpectedly—I was a surprise to him and he was a surprise to me."

"Did you find the old Blois house?"

"There's nothing to find—but a heap of rubbish," said Mr. Gammage, sulkily.

The lady could not understand what had happened to her fellow-traveller. The jolt and rumble of the omnibus half smothered his voice, but what she heard she disliked. His manner was odd, too, both hostile and uneasy. She had just posted a letter home in which she spoke of him with the warmest admiration, and she felt quite distressed to think that her daughter and her friends would have some reason soon to wonder at her judgment. She was a Mrs. Bradwardine, the wife of the Rector of Greymarsh, and she had been spending six months in Australia with a son established there. On the way back she had been attracted by the name of Blois, had Roger pre-

sented to her, and discovered his connection with Colonel Blois, her near neighbour and her husband's patron. They had seen a good deal of each other, and last night she had written the letter that now weighed on her mind like an indiscretion. However, the omnibus arrived at the station in three minutes, and she could only hope, as she descended from it, that her unpleasant impression was transient and mistaken. But to her surprise and vexation the young man's behaviour only strengthened it. He hustled past her without offering any assistance, hailed a porter, got hold of his own luggage, and even omitted as he went off to lift his hat.

The truth is that Mr. Gammage was getting flustered. He had entered in a hurry on a game with more difficult moves in it than he had foreseen ; but he thought that the worst would be over when he got clear of Rockmouth. He carefully chose an empty compartment, and he arrived at Paddington without misadventure. But as he was picking out Roger's trunks on the platform there, he found himself close to Mrs. Bradwardine again, and she responded to his greeting with a want of cordiality that attracted his notice. He wondered what he had done.

"Well, good-bye," she said ; "I suppose I shall see you when you come to my neighbourhood."

"I'm not making a long stay in London," said Mr. Gammage, who, like your true Cockney, hardly realized that any one lived anywhere else.

"What has London to do with it?" said Mrs. Bradwardine. "I go home on Thursday."

"My mistake," said Mr. Gammage, rather ruffled ; "I'd forgotten."

The lady turned away and spoke to her porter. Mr. Gammage got as far from her as he could. He had decided to spend the night at the Blackfriars' Hotel. The outside was well known to him, and it was a long way from the Metropole. His encounter with Mrs. Bradwardine had shown him that he must do all he could to avoid Roger's travelling companions.

VII

MR. GAMMAGE sat at dinner with Germans to right of him and Germans to left of him. He had arrived when *table d'hôte* was nearly over, and ate his soup while his neighbours played with their dessert. He drank half a bottle of champagne, and after dinner he ordered black coffee and a shilling cigar. So far so good. He was enjoying himself very much. These things were the solid fruits of his daring, and most agreeable. But he had not opened those trunks yet, and the champagne had not done all he expected towards giving him spirit for the job. It would be interesting, no doubt, as interesting as a safe to a burglar. Mr. Gammage tried to see where this analogy failed and not to see where it held good. He was jumpy, to-night, he told himself, and no wonder after passing such a day. He wondered what Julia was doing, and what she would say if she could see him sitting here? He felt sorry for both Julia and Flossie, who would believe he was drowned and weep for him. If everything went well with him he might some day venture back to Trevalla as Roger Blois, make fresh acquaintance with Julia, and give her a real pearl necklace. But this sentimental idea only flashed through Mr. Gammage's mind while under the influence of dinner, it found no harbourage there. He could not afford to trouble about Julia or Flossie, or anyone but himself yet awhile. He was engaged in a hazardous game for high stakes. At least he hoped they were high. He got up rather hurriedly from a half-finished cup of coffee, because he felt that every drop of it was neutralizing the effect of the champagne. He must see about those trunks.

He went up to his room, turned on the lights, and set to work. By midnight he knew all that the three trunks contained, and he had set aside certain letters, photographs, and account-books to study at his leisure. The clothes he found delighted him; but before he repacked them he had to ring for a brandy and soda to steady his nerves. He was trembling so much with

excitement that his fingers were almost useless ; for, cursory as his investigations were, he had discovered that his kinsman was a man of large means. But his kinsman was dead, poor fellow ; and he, Herbert Gammage, by his own daring, stood in his shoes. Mr. Gammage had not made out yet whether there was any legal heir to Roger's property. That was a point to discover later, and deal with according to circumstances. Mr. Gammage did not want to be a bigger scoundrel than he could help, but he did not mean to be quixotic either. Meanwhile it occurred to him that he must ask at the Metropole for letters and telegrams. There might be some messages from Colonel Blois, for instance. Roger had said he was going to stay with him. Mr. Gammage did not feel in any hurry to confront the colonel, but he foresaw that he might be driven to do so.

A good night's sleep did much to increase his self-confidence. His eyes when they opened fell on a Chippendale wardrobe, with glass doors. His bell when he touched it brought an attentive chambermaid. His breakfast when he sat down to it was chosen from a menu long enough for the Lord Mayor. The waiter advised him that herrings were good this morning, but he refused them with scorn. He might have had herrings for breakfast at Barnes. He ordered a Dover sole, and *merlans grillés*. He did not know what merlans meant, and it occurred to him that he might soon run across to Paris and pick up a little French. There was no reason why the future should not fulfil his dearest day-dreams, and one of them used to begin and end with a holiday in Paris.

He was rather disappointed when "merlans" turned out to be common whittings ; but he made a good breakfast, and then went into a smoking-room and looked at the day's papers. He looked most carefully at those little paragraphs that contain news from the provinces, but he could not find any allusion to Trevalla or to a death by drowning on that coast. He paid his kinsman the tribute of a moment's compunction or regret ; then, as after all the world belongs

to the living and the valorous, and as it was a fine June morning, Mr. Gammage, wearing a light tweed suit, brown shoes, and a silk hat, strolled down Fleet Street and the Strand towards Charing Cross. He bought a rose for his button-hole; he bought a gold-topped cane and twirled it; he bought an expensive cigar and lighted it; he looked at every man he passed and pitied him: for the men you meet in the Strand at midday are either hard at work or out at elbows. He thought of Mr. Jackson and Mr. Salter glued to their desks; he thought of Florrie, at St. Martin's-le-Grand. He had the grace to hope she would not fret much over the news of his death, and he pictured Mr. Salter trying to console her. It really seemed as if he might be doing old Jimmy a turn.

The day was so fine, and his reflections were so absorbing, that Mr. Gammage found himself at Charing Cross in no time. With his cigar still in his mouth, he entered the Metropole, and as he did so a young man with a military set to his shoulders caught sight of him, and went forward rather eagerly to meet him.

"Hullo, Blois," he began, and then he checked, he hardly knew why. It was Blois; but had Blois gone mad? His hat, his cane, his cigar all pointed to it. "What happened last night?" he went on. "I turned up right enough, but you——"

"I didn't," said Mr. Gammage, feebly. "Very sorry, but it was impossible."

"Then why didn't you wire?"

"I did," said Mr. Gammage. "Do you mean to say you never got it? I wired from Rockmouth. You see, I missed my train."

The young man looked at Mr. Gammage in perplexity.

"I'm not making a mistake?" he said. "You are Blois?"

"I'm Blois right enough. I've come for my letters. Can you tell me how to get 'em?"

"You must ask for your number at this office," said the young man, leading the way. "But about that wire. How did you address it?"

"Oh! just your name and Hotel Metropole," said Mr. Gammage, airily. "I'm in a deuce of a hurry, my dear boy. I've a lady waiting outside."

"Why did you address your wire to the Metropole, when you knew I was not staying here?"

"Not staying here! But you are here."

"I came ten minutes ago—to fetch you."

"Look here," said Mr. Gammage, confidentially. "I've had a lot of bother since yesterday, and all my little engagements have gone clean out of my 'e'd. Let me have your visiting-card with your address on it, and I'll send you another wire this afternoon."

Captain Lascelles, like every one else, had heard stories of niggers who came over here and were civilized, but relapsed directly they were amongst niggers again. It seemed almost as if something of the kind had happened here, and that the gentleman of the *Electric* became a low-bred Cockney the moment he arrived in London. Yet in Roger's case it could not be a relapse or a reversion. Captain Lascelles grew more and more bewildered as he stood near the office while Mr. Gammage made inquiries, and it was in an undecided frame of mind that he went on with him to the bureau where letters were distributed. He had asked Roger Blois and two other men to lunch at his club, and he was both relieved and annoyed to find that the arrangement was apparently superseded.

There was one letter for Mr. Blois which Mr. Gammage opened immediately and read. It was written from the Manor House, Greymarsh, and said that unless Mr. Blois wired to the contrary he would be met at the station on Wednesday evening at seven. It was signed Anthony Blois.

"Wednesday evening at seven," said Mr. Gammage, looking up. "Excuse me. I've got to hump myself. So long."

"There is no telegram here for me?" said Captain Lascelles.

Mr. Gammage turned from the vanishing cordiality of this young man only to collide with the lady who

had been with him in the station omnibus yesterday. Her glance just recognized him, and passed with increasing friendliness to Captain Lascelles.

"I want a word with you, Jack, before you go off with Mr. Blois," she said.

It became a question of time and distance. Mr. Gammage was nearer the door than the two who were now shaking hands with each other. He bolted like a rabbit, tore through the hall, jumped into a hansom, and only breathed again when the horse's head turned citywards. Meanwhile Mrs. Bradwardine and Jack Lascelles, her nephew, looked at each other.

"I thought that you and Mr. Blois had some engagement together this morning," she said.

"We were going to my tailor's, and then to lunch at my club," said Jack. "I suppose he has forgotten."

"What has happened to the man?"

"I came to dine with him last night, but he never turned up. He says he wired to me here, but there is no wire. Besides, he knew I was at Grosvenor Gardens."

"I can't understand it," said Mrs. Bradwardine, and therewith changed the subject. Jack Lascelles was on his way to Ireland, and she wanted to talk of family affairs to him.

Mr. Gammage stopped his hansom at a bookseller's shop in the Strand and asked for "books about Australia." It had occurred to him that he must at once study the geography, the scenery and the customs of the country from which, as Roger Blois, he came. He found on looking into Bradshaw that his train left King's Cross at half-past two, so he could count on four hours in which to get up his past history and surroundings. Roger's private papers and photographs would help him, but so would some good illustrated books. When he reached his hotel he put those he had bought into the trunk with his dressing-case, and then went downstairs to lunch. He chose a seat in a comfortable, but badly-lighted corner, where his face could only be seen in deep shadow. Nevertheless, a little man who sat with a friend at a table close by, started violently at sight

of him, stared hard, went on with his meal, stared hard again, and at last put down his knife and fork.

"Eisenstein," he said to his friend, "do you see a young man sitting in that corner?"

Eisenstein looked at Mr. Gammage.

"Of course I see him," he said.

"What is he like?"

"Like? Like any one else. What are you playing at, Angelo?"

"He is the living image of that poor young fool who is drowned," said Mr. Angelo, raising his voice so that it easily reached his clerk's ears.

Mr. Gammage went on with his lunch. He had not seen Mr. Angelo when he first sat down, but he was not much surprised to encounter him here. He knew that his late chief often came to this hotel for his midday meal. He got as far back as he could into his corner, took up a newspaper lying on the table, and pretended to read and eat at the same time. Otherwise as he listened his eyes might have wandered in embarrassment and self-betrayal towards Mr. Angelo.

"Who is drowned?" Mr. Eisenstein was saying. "What's the matter, Angelo?"

"I've been upset. I had a young man in my office who was no good at all, and he is drowned."

"Well, I don't see why that need upset you," said Mr. Eisenstein.

Mr. Angelo sighed.

"He was a silly ass, and slack and lazy. Still I did not wish him to drown himself."

"Oh, he drowned himself, did he? Where?"

"A long way from here. His friends found his clothes and wired at once. I was told this morning by one of his fellow-clerks. You see he had just cost me a hundred pounds through his stupidity."

"You'll get over his loss in time," said Mr. Eisenstein.

"I don't like having his death laid at my door," said Mr. Angelo.

He glanced repeatedly at Mr. Gammage while he talked and tried to convince himself that the resem-

blance was incomplete and accidental. He observed that the stranger wore better clothes than his clerk had done, that his hair was cut shorter, and that he apparently took no interest in what his neighbours were saying.

"Why should his death lie at your door?" asked Mr. Eisenstein.

"I was furious with him, and I practically told him to go elsewhere."

"Well, he's done it. Saves you giving him a character."

"I should have lied if I had spoken well of him in any way," said Mr. Angelo, mournfully.

"I hate the rubbish of the world," said Mr. Eisenstein. "I should like to drown it wholesale."

With this humane sentiment the conversation, as far as it concerned Mr. Gammage, came to an end. He sat there hot and angry, wishing he could take that heavy water-bottle and fling it at Mr. Eisenstein's hard, ugly head. But the news he had heard was of consummate interest, and well worth the strain of the encounter. His kinsman was drowned beyond all doubt, and Herbert Gammage was mourned for dead at Barnes and at Trevalla.

VIII

COLONEL BLOIS had been left a widower at Pamela's birth, and she was his only child. He ought to have idolized her. Perhaps he did in his own way, but he was a hot-tempered man, and his girl resembled him. Five years ago he had married again, chiefly, as he owned himself, because he wanted some one to manage Pamela. But the result was not all that he wished or expected. Pamela managed her step-mother. From the first she took that gentle lady under her protection and stood up for her rights when Mrs. Blois would have gladly yielded them.

"I would rather give it up than vex your father, my dear," Mrs. Blois would say.

"And I would rather vex my father than see you give it up," Pamela would answer.

Then there would be a battle royal between the man and the girl, and as often as not the girl would get her way. She did not know what fear was—at this time of her life she did not know what forbearance was. Until her step-mother came, she had run rather wild with a governess who could not control her, and a set of old servants who spoiled her. She had no near relatives except an aunt who lived at Wimbledon with a delicate husband, and could not pay her harum-skarum niece much attention. The girl had lived as much out-of-doors as a boy, and could be as blunt as a boy. She had learned to manage a horse and speak the truth, and when at the age of fifteen she was sent to school, she found it hard to sit indoors and apply herself to the silly arts still considered part of a girl's education. But she stayed at school three years and came home to all appearance a young lady like any other. At least her father felt satisfied when he saw her Pompadour coiffure and her demure manner. She did not look like the tomboy she used to be. But before she had been at home six weeks, he told his wife that the girl, for all her airs, was still a little vixen.

"A vixen! Pamela! Oh, my dear, what an expression!" said the second Mrs. Blois.

"She has just stamped both her feet at me," said the colonel. "First one and then the other."

"Why did she do that?" said the second Mrs. Blois, with the surprise of a woman who has never wanted to stamp her feet at anybody.

"To relieve her feelings, I suppose," said the colonel. "She wants to drive the new mare, and I refuse to allow it."

"But the dear child is so fond of driving," said Mrs. Blois; and her tone, though submissive, suggested that the colonel was rather unkind. This made him want to stamp his feet, first one and then the other.

"Do you wish the dear child to break her neck or the mare's knees?" he asked.

"Which event should you mind most, dad?" said the vixen, coming into the room with an air of an unruffled saint. She sat down beside her step-mother, picked up that lady's knitting, found, as usual, that several stitches were dropped, and set herself with twinkling fingers to pick them up again. Mrs. Blois looked at the girl with admiring affection.

"There is nothing Pamela cannot do when she sets her mind on it," she said.

"Then I wish she would set her mind on behaving properly," said the colonel, as he marched out of the room.

"Dad's annoyed," said Pamela.

"You can hardly wonder at that," said Mrs. Blois.

"I don't," said Pamela.

"A man like your father, who commanded a cavalry regiment with conspicuous success——"

"I believe he thought he was back there this morning. His language——"

"Pamela!"

"I'm not going to repeat it. Poor dad! I wish I'd been a boy."

"But as you're not one," said Mrs. Blois, seizing her opportunity, "why not make up your mind to it, and behave in the gentle feminine way men admire in women?"

The girl's low laugh rippled through the room, and in spite of herself the older woman smiled.

"You're a naughty girl though, Pamela, to stamp your feet at your father," she went on. "I never did such a thing when I was young."

The girl laughed again and looked at her step-mother. Mrs. Blois was the meek, plain daughter of a meek, plain country parson, and it was unimaginable that she should ever have diverged for an instant from the paths of propriety and obedience.

"I never wanted to drive," said Mrs. Blois, "we had a donkey cart, but——"

"Dad's never annoyed with me for more than five minutes," interrupted Pamela, "and I always forgive

him in a quarter of an hour. But we can't forgive the heir. That is why we are both so irritable. You are sure to find us more trying than usual the next few days."

Pamela must have had streaks of patience in her impatient disposition, or she could not have borne as good-temperedly as she did with her step-mother. Mrs. Blois was one of those exasperating people who take everything literally, and want it explained.

"But you haven't even seen the young man," she said now. "What has he done that you can't forgive?"

"He is the heir."

"How can you blame him for that?"

"We do—bitterly."

"I call that a little unreasonable," said Mrs. Blois, after prolonged meditation.

"Dad and I are unreasonable. We like to be."

"But really, Pamela, this young man can't help your father having no son to succeed him. Of course, if you had been a boy things would have been different."

"I suppose that is so," said Pamela, solemnly.

The knitting was set right now and ready for Mrs. Blois to tangle again. The girl got up as she replaced the work in her step-mother's hands. She looked out of the great bay windows across the terrace, and the garden, at the woods of Greymarsh and the sea beyond them. Wherever she saw land she saw her father's property—property that in her opinion ought to pass to the child of his body and not to the stranger expected here to-day.

"As if a girl was not as good as a boy—and better," she said; "the law is a back number."

"After all, we belong to the weaker sex," said Mrs. Blois.

"Is that a reason why the strong ones should defraud us?" asked the girl fiercely. "I love this place. It belongs to dad. Some day it ought to belong to me—and it won't."

As she spoke her eyes shifted from the window to her step-mother's face, and she saw Mrs. Blois smile slightly at her knitting.

"Of course, I know what you and dad have in mind," she said.

"In mind?" echoed Mrs. Blois.

"A baby would know. It makes me hopping mad to think of it."

"My dear—those dreadful American expressions!"

"Tell you what I mean, don't they? I won't be a puppet in the hands of my elders. Dad ought to have lived in the twelfth century."

"Pamela!"

"And worn chain armour!"

"What for?"

"Then he could have stuffed me into a convent."

Mrs. Blois said, in an exhausted way, that she wanted her beef tea, and wished Pamela to ring for it. She could not see any connection between chain armour and convents, and, in fact, she did not know what Pamela was talking about. But she would like to shut her eyes till the beef tea came. Mrs. Blois considered herself a strictly truthful woman, and she would probably have gone to the stake rather than say she had a headache when she had not. But she wriggled away from Pamela's attack without a suspicion that her retreat was disingenuous. The girl understood, glanced mirthfully at the closed eyes of her step-mother, rang the bell and went out of the room. She spent the rest of the morning on the golf links, and sat down to lunch with an appetite.

"Mrs. Bradwardine comes back to-morrow," she announced.

"How do you know?" asked her father.

"I've had a round with Kitty this morning. She expects her mother to-morrow. She came home on the *Electric*."

"I wonder if she saw anything of Roger Blois."

"Kitty says her mother's letter from Rockmouth was full of him. They seem to have chummed up."

"We shall be able to judge for ourselves this evening," said Colonel Blois.

"First impressions are important, but it is wiser not to attach too much value to them," said Mrs. Blois.

"Quite so," said her husband. He always replied to his wife's platitudes with gravity, and she never discovered that he was not as serious as she was herself.

"Are we all to assemble in the hall and do him homage?" inquired Pamela.

"Why should we, my dear?" said Mrs. Blois. "He arrives at half-past seven, and I am always upstairs dressing then. Perhaps we ought to dress early and be in the drawing-room. Do you think we ought, Anthony? The hall is rather chilly at night, and there are so few comfortable chairs. Besides, it is not our custom to sit there."

"We are not going to sit there," said Colonel Blois, glancing severely at his daughter, "and you need not dress earlier than usual. The dog-cart will meet Mr. Blois, and I will see him when he arrives."

Pamela spent most of the afternoon at the Rectory playing tennis with Kitty Bradwardine, the curate of Greymarsh, and Sir Charles Burnham, one of Kitty's admirers. Incidentally they talked of Roger Blois, because, in an English country neighbourhood, the arrival of a new young man is an event of importance.

"Mother says she lost her heart to him," said Kitty.

As Pamela walked home she wondered what the phrase meant on Mrs. Bradwardine's lips. Probably a good deal. Kitty's mother was a fastidious woman, not easily charmed. Pamela thought that she herself did not want to be charmed; but she had no objection to charming other people. As she went through the garden she gathered a few tea roses, and when she dressed she chose a pale blue sash.

"Now I look like a doll," she said to Martha, her maid. "My dolls always wore white frocks and blue ribbons."

"Yes, m'm," said Martha.

She always said "Yes, m'm" or "No, m'm" to her employers. She found it checked their troublesome conversation.

"Do you think I look like a doll, Martha?" said Pamela, who considered the girl a doll, but rather liked her.

"No, m'm," said Martha. "Will you have your corals?"

"Certainly not," said Pamela, looking for an instant like her father. Then she laughed. "They would make me still more dolly," she said.

"Yes, m'm," said Martha, opening the door for her young lady and reflecting that she would be able to meet Bill Stubbs as she had promised by eight o'clock.

Pamela had dressed quickly to-night, and as she ran downstairs she heard voices in the hall. She arrived there in time to find her father shaking hands with a tall young man, whom he presented to her as Mr. Roger Blois. She shook hands too, and looked at her father to see whether her instant unfavourable impression found confirmation in his face. The young man had hardly spoken, he had not been half a minute in the house, yet the timbre of his voice, the very way he stood, had jarred on her already. Of course her father's face was non-committal, but that told her all she wanted to know. Meanwhile Mr. Gammage was receiving impressions too—in battalions. The hall was big and old, the colonel was not as old as he expected, very polite and rather alarming, the girl was a daisy. He wished he knew whether he ought to keep his hat in his hand or put it down. One of the men at the door had offered to take it, but Mr. Gammage had passed on too flurried to give it up. Confound the thing. As he shook hands with the girl it dropped and rolled along the floor. Some one in evening clothes, who stood near them, picked it up. Mr. Gammage thanked him effusively, and wanted to take it back. But this personage, whose manners were even more alarming than the colonel's, walked a yard or so away

with it, summoned a footman, and gave it to him. Mr. Gammage wondered who he could be; and why the colonel, who addressed him as Dawes, did not introduce him.

"We dine at eight," said Colonel Blois. "You will like to go straight to your room?"

"I don't mind," said Mr. Gammage, glancing at his host's tweeds; "I washed my hands before I came."

Pamela escaped to the drawing-room, and a little later, when her step-mother appeared, was demurely looking at an illustrated paper.

"Has the young man come?" said Mrs. Blois.

"Yes," said Pamela.

"Does he look like a Blois?"

Pamela hesitated, then glanced at her father, who had dressed more quickly than his guest, and had just come into the room.

"He is rather like dad," she said.

"What do you mean?" began the colonel, wrathfully. Then he checked himself and opened the *Spectator*.

A moment later the gong sounded, Dawes opened the door, and the heir of Greymarsh came into the room.

Mr. Gammage did not look his best in evening clothes, and his cousin's did not fit him well. They were big across the shoulders and tight across the back and short in the sleeves. His ill-kept hands had looked so conspicuously ill kept that, to the amazement of the man told off to help him, he had put on white kid gloves. He had often worn them at subscription dances, and he thought they could only be a fault on the right side. He wore a ready-made tie bought in the Strand this morning, and a couple of roses in his button-hole. When he was presented to Mrs. Blois, and directed to take her in to dinner, he offered her his arm and went out of the room before the colonel. It was a natural mistake to make, but the colonel looked gloomily at his guest's wrinkly back. He knew girls attached an exaggerated importance to solecisms men easily forgave.

"Dad," whispered Pamela, hanging well behind, "when you were in Australia did the men come down to dinner in gloves?"

"I never notice silly trifles of that kind," said the colonel.

"His nose is exactly like yours," the girl went on; and her father's response as they entered the dining-room reminded her of the little growl her Bedlington puppy sometimes gave when she disturbed him in a nap.

"Do you play golf in Australia?" asked Pamela, as she ate her soup.

"They do play it," said Mr. Gammage. "It isn't much in my line."

"What is your line?"

"I'm rather partial to bridge."

"What do you do out-of-doors?"

"Bike as a general thing."

"I needn't ask an Australian if he rides," said Colonel Blois.

"Well," said Mr. Gammage, with an air of frank confession, "I'm rather peculiar. I prefer a bike to a horse any day. I should think you have good roads about here. No 'ills."

The colonel turned sharply to a servant at his elbow to give an order. Pamela helped herself with preternatural gravity to fish. Mrs. Blois was trying to make up her slow mind about their guest, and to his intense discomfort, fixed her mild eyes on him from time to time. Mr. Gammage was not enjoying his dinner. The servants worried him. They had nothing to do, in his opinion, but to stand about and stare. Mrs. Blois worried him because he perceived that he puzzled her. The colonel, though polite, was not genial. Pamela had just turned red. She looked like a young lady who wants to smile and will not, and he was just going to ask her to tell him the joke when his host claimed his attention.

"By the way," said Colonel Blois, "what have you done about that kangaroo?"

IX

MR. GAMMAGE nearly dropped his knife and fork. He put them carefully down on either side of his plate, with their handles resting on the cloth, and he stared helplessly at Colonel Blois.

"Kangaroo!" he repeated, not knowing, of course, that nothing annoyed his irascible host more easily than a senseless echo of his words instead of a reply to them.

"The little one the sailor had, you know," said Pamela, coming to the rescue, "the wallaby—the one you wrote about just before you sailed."

"Oh, of course," said Mr. Gammage, "the one I wrote about—of course—I had forgotten it."

His glass of sherry was unfinished, and he took it up now and held it between himself and the light, as if the colour attracted him. Then he sipped it slowly. Colonel Blois helped himself to stewed sweet-breads and said nothing.

"Have you brought it with you?" said Pamela.

"I have not," said Mr. Gammage, regretfully.

"Where did you leave it?" asked Colonel Blois.

"Had it grown much by the end of the journey?" asked Mrs. Blois, disregarding the frown on her husband's face. She was most anxious to please him, but she never could remember that he hated interruption. Mr. Gammage turned to answer her.

"It outgrew its strength," he said. "The doctor did all he could for it—in fact he was most attentive—fed it entirely on raw eggs and brandy for a week. But it was no use. One day the poor beggar just gave a jump and died. I was very fond of that kangaroo."

"Perhaps you would have been sorry to give it us," said Pamela.

"Not at all," said Mr. Gammage. "I'll get you another from Jamrach's, if you like."

"I don't want one," said Mrs. Blois quickly; "I hate animals that jump. You never know where they are. The Duchess of Wells had a pet monkey, and last time I called at the Castle, it was in the room and

leaped on my lap and upset my tea. Every one laughed—except me and the monkey. Of course it was most kind of you to bring us a kangaroo, and I am sorry the poor creature died, but, perhaps, it is better to leave well alone and not try another."

"No wonder it died," growled the colonel. "Fancy feeding a kangaroo on brandy and raw eggs. You must have had a fool for a doctor."

"What would you give a sick kangaroo?" inquired Mr. Gammage, in his politest voice, the voice that used to drive Mr. Angelo to fury. It seemed to have much the same effect on Colonel Blois, though he did not show his wrath as primitively as the glove-merchant.

Every one, except Mrs. Blois, thought that dinner took a long time to-night. She babbled pleasantly to no one in particular, fed her spaniel with biscuits, and returned to the drawing-room without any sense of disappointment or vexation. Nevertheless, her first word to Pamela showed that she had used her eyes.

"Australians seem to have odd manners," she said, settling herself comfortably in her chair.

"Some of them," said Pamela.

"But we must not condemn foreign countries because their customs differ from our own."

"Australia is not a foreign country. It is us."

"It is a long way off, my dear. Perhaps in Melbourne men come down to dinner in gloves. I wonder if I could persuade your father to wear them to-morrow."

"What for?"

"Well—to make the young man more comfortable. I thought he did not seem at ease."

"I thought he was rather too much so once or twice," said Pamela. "For instance, when he offered me those chocolates at dessert and said he supposed I was a sweet-tooth like his other young-lady friends."

"If he was not an Australian, I should say he was not quite a gentleman," said Mrs. Blois.

"I should say so anyhow, but I should put it more strongly."

"Perhaps he is one of Nature's gentlemen."

"Let us hope so—also that he has a good heart and a pretty touch on the piano."

"Does he play the piano?" asked Mrs. Blois, perplexed.

Pamela did, and she went to it now while her step-mother nodded over her knitting-needles. She felt inclined for tempestuous music, but she began with the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata, because it sent Mrs. Blois to sleep. Then she played the Scherzo, which invariably brought with it, she hardly knew why, the picture of a quiet corner in one of her father's coverts, where small wild creatures ran to and fro unafraid. Then with a determined poise of her slim hands she began the third movement. She was not half through when her father and the Australian came across the room towards her. Directly they reached the piano Colonel Blois left his guest there and went to his usual chair opposite his wife. Mr. Gammage sat down close to the piano and asked Pamela if she was fond of music. She stopped playing in the middle of a bar to answer him.

"Yes, I am," she said.

"What is the name of the piece you are playing?" he said.

Pamela told him, and asked him if he liked it. He said it didn't seem to have much to catch hold of, and was rather abrupt at the end. She said he had not heard the end, because he interrupted her in the middle.

"Can't you talk when you are playing?" he asked with surprise. At Barnes they had music every evening, music and shrieks of laughter and popular songs all mixed together in a friendly pot-pourri; he wished himself back there just for half an hour.

"Do you sing or play?" asked Pamela, evading his question. She could have spoken without coming to a stop, but she had not chosen to do so.

"I sing one or two humorous songs," said Mr. Gammage, who had made quite a little stir at a Christmas party with "My lodger, he's a nice young man."

"Oh!" said Pamela. She gave a guess at what "humorous" stood for in Mr. Gammage's repertoire, and she knew that Mrs. Blois considered all comic songs vulgar.

"And I whistle," said Mr. Gammage.

"My father likes cards after dinner," said Pamela, getting up from the piano. "Do you play whist?"

"I used to," said Mr. Gammage, and again a picture from his past troubled him; the picture of a little bamboo table covered with an old "art" serge cloth—set in a corner of the dining-room—four pipes—an ancient pack of cards—the boys' noisy laughter—Florrie and her mother making blouses at the big table.

"I used to play every night," he said, "when it was in fashion. But nowadays, of course, I play bridge."

"We still play whist," said Pamela.

Mrs. Blois had never been able to learn bridge. As a girl she had played whist, and she knew that you should refrain from trumping your partner's trick, return him trumps when he seemed to want them, and remember whether the ace of each suit was out or not. This was sound knowledge, as far as it went, but Colonel Blois preferred his wife as an adversary. He played a fair game, and had stormed the first principles pretty successfully into Pamela. So he sat down in a good temper to-night when the cut made them partners, and as they won two rubbers in succession, he remained in a good temper. But Mr. Gammage's ways at the game did not please him. There is a manner of flicking down your card that gentlemen consider fit for the pothouse; and there are small insincerities of play harder to forgive than a burglary. Colonel Blois made up his mind to-night that he would never sit down to bridge with his present guest. He could see him as dummy giving Mrs. Blois hints of what he wanted played. His game to-night was shrewd, and he had a memory, but he relied too much on his own hand. Mrs. Blois did not observe this, but her eyes grew round when he thumped a winning card on the table and swept up a trick before

any one could see what took it. He flurried her, too, by throwing down his hand before the game was finished and announcing the result. When her husband did this she had no objection, because the colonel could do no wrong. But when Mr. Gammage did it, she thought he took too much upon himself.

"After bridge, whist seems a bit flat," said Mr. Gammage, when he had lost the second rubber. Colonel Blois was replacing the cards in a leather case.

"Have you played much bridge?" he asked.

"A good deal. The boys and I——"

He checked himself, and Colonel Blois allowed the matter to drop. But Pamela wondered why the Australian did not finish his sentence.

"Was it lonely where you lived, or had you many neighbours?" she asked.

"Well, it depends what you call lonely," said Mr. Gammage. "Of course you don't get the society in a place like Australia that you do in London; and when you own fifty thousand acres yourself it takes a little to get outside 'em unless you live on the edge."

"Did you own fifty thousand acres?"

"That's putting it at the lowest figure."

"What have you done with them?"

"Oh, they're still there," said Mr. Gammage.

"Were there any kangaroo on them?"

"Jumping about everywhere—as tame as the deer in Bushey Park."

"You seem to know a good many things about London and England, considering that you only arrived the day before yesterday," said Pamela.

Colonel Blois interrupted this conversation by carrying off his guest to smoke. He gave him a comfortable chair and supplied him with cigars and whisky, and then put him on the rack by asking questions about his life and circumstances. Mr. Gammage had not wasted his afternoon, and he made out a fair case for himself. He said that his affairs were prosperous, and could be wound up without his return to Australia. He had not decided yet what he was going to do, but

before settling down he had a fancy to see more of the world. He astutely asked the colonel's advice about Eastern countries, and so led his host as far as possible from Australia and from his own past. Colonel Blois was always pleased to talk of India, but as he did so to-night he observed his guest, and wished he liked him better. For there he sat, undoubted heir of Greymarsh, and a true Blois by the cut of his jib. It was in voice and in the subtleties of manner that he failed. Also his nerves seemed jumpy. What ailed the fellow? He had just said that he thought of beginning his travels with a fortnight in Paris.

"But not just yet, I hope," said Colonel Blois, courteously. "We have a few people to dine on Monday, and a garden party on the 28th."

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Gammage, fidgeting in his chair.

"You don't dislike meeting people, I hope?"

"It depends who they are."

"No doubt," said the colonel.

"I don't mind strangers so much—and of course in this part of the country——"

"Mrs. Bradwardine is coming on Monday."

Mr. Gammage uncrossed his legs and crossed them again. He pretended to look reflectively at his cigar, and he said nothing. His thoughts went straight to the lady in the omnibus and at the Metropole, but he dared not take for granted that she was Mrs. Bradwardine.

"You made friends on the *Electric*, didn't you?" said Colonel Blois, surprised by his guest's silence.

"At first," said Mr. Gammage.

Colonel Blois had known Mrs. Bradwardine for years, and he had now seen Mr. Gammage. He was less surprised by the suggestion that the friendship had not endured than he had been by the idea of its beginning.

"The Mrs. Bradwardine I know is a tall thin lady," continued Mr. Gammage. "She has grey hair and a haughty way of looking at you. Must have been a pretty girl once, and thinks a lot of herself."

"It is not likely that there were two Mrs. Bradwardines on the *Electric*," said Colonel Blois. "She is the wife of our rector, and our very good friend."

"May be all right when you know her," said Mr. Gammage, gloomily. "If you had observed her behaviour to me at Paddington, and yesterday in the Metropole, you wouldn't have said friendly described it. Dirt under her feet would be nearer the mark."

Colonel Blois felt troubled, and tried not to show it.

"I must tell my wife not to put you near each other at dinner, then," he said.

"Trust me for that," said Mr. Gammage. "Wherever that lady sits, you'll find me at the other end of the table."

X

THE hot June sun streamed into the little bedroom, and the bluebottles seemed to enjoy it. They buzzed noisily from the window to the sick man's face, here and there and back again, and his weak efforts to brush them off tired him only. He lay there staring at surroundings he did not know, at the gaudy flapping blind that kept out neither light nor heat, at the walls plastered with cardboard texts, at the cheap furniture. He tried to remember where he was, and could remember nothing. He tried to sleep, and could not because of the heat and the flies. He was thirsty, but there was nothing near him to drink, and he had no strength yet to rise. His head ached, and his bandaged hand pained him. He looked for a bell, but saw none. For a long while he lay there helpless, feverish, and miserable. Then the door opened, and a young woman he did not know came in. She had a cup in her hand, and nearly dropped it when she saw him. For he looked at her with speculation in his eyes, and he had not done that since he had been brought to the farm a week ago, half drowned and still unconscious. Some fishermen had carried him in, when she had already sent a telegram to Barnes announcing his death and the consequent postpone-

ment of her journey. His clothes had been found by the shore on Coffin Bay, and until the fishing-boat arrived every one in the village took for granted that he had gone out to bathe and been drowned.

"You'm better," she said joyfully, as she approached the bed.

"Have I been ill?" asked Roger, and he wondered at his own voice. It sounded weak and unfamiliar.

"You've been at death's door," said the girl.

Roger watched her dreamily and wondered who she could be, and why she looked at him with affection.

"How did I get there?" he asked.

"How did you get here, you mean?" said the girl, in a tone of tender reproach. "What did 'e want to go and swim out to the Coffin Rock for when I'd told 'e how dangerous it was all about there. If you'd been fifty yards nearer they couldn't have got hold of you."

"Who couldn't?"

"Tom Blixworthy and Steve. They saw you——"

"How long have I been here?"

"Reckoning from the time you came, a fortnight come Saturday. Shall I shake your pillow before you have your milk? You'm a lot better, bain't you, dear?"

"What next?" thought Roger; but he had hardly time to ask himself the question before Julia answered it. In a matter-of-fact way she stooped over the bed and kissed him.

"You mustn't talk, you know," she said.

"I don't want to talk," said Roger, trying to look pleased.

But the girl used cheap scent, her beauty was flamboyant, and her voice was shrill. Just now it went through his aching head intolerably.

"The doctor said I wasn't to say a word to you when you did wake up," she went on. "He said he wouldn't answer for the consequences if we let you get excited about anything. He's coming again to-night."

"Have you sent to Rockmouth for my things?"

said Roger, looking round the room for his belongings and seeing none.

"They're 'all right," said the girl; "they were found on the shore."

She had gone to the window, and was noisily pulling up the blind. She had never been ill in her life, and had no idea how the creak of her shoes and the jar of her voice affected the fastidious aching senses of the man lying ill there. As she came away from the window she brushed heavily against the bedstead, and apologized cheerfully. He shut his eyes, and in a state of tension waited for her to go. When he heard the door bang he opened his eyes again, and pondered over the strange things she had done and said. Why had she kissed him, why had she called him dear, why had she spoken as if all his property had been found by the shore? He supposed his clothes might have been found and his identity discovered. But he could not think consecutively for long. Now that the blind was up and a cooler air came into the room, the flies were less aggressive, and he soon fell asleep. When he woke an elderly woman stood beside the bed, while a stout-faced man with the eyes of a ferret and the mouth of a fool felt his pulse. This man sat on the bed and addressed his patient with jocular familiarity.

"So we are quite ourselves again, and remember all about it," he began.

"I remember getting cramp when I was swimming," said Roger.

"But what do you remember before and after?"

"I remember everything before and nothing since. What has happened to my hand?"

The doctor gave a highly technical explanation to which the woman listened open-eyed, and which Roger followed incompletely and impatiently.

"That's very interesting," he said. "But I don't understand a word of it. Will you oblige me by saying it over again in English? Never mind about the causes just now. I want the results."

The doctor glared at his patient before he attempted to reply. He considered the young man's independent tone outrageous under the circumstances.

"The injury will affect your writing for a time," he said stiffly. "You will have the use of your hand for some things in a day or two, but if you write or paint or play the piano let us say—what is your occupation?"

"Over here? I can hardly tell you," said Roger. "I suppose I must get an amanuensis."

"Poor soul!" said the woman. "Julia, she told me he was still daft like. He's a clerk, sir, when he's at home."

"Who are you?" asked Roger.

"Come, come," said the doctor. "You're not going to tell me you've forgotten Mrs. Martin. It won't wash, you know."

"I wish you wouldn't sit on the bed," said Roger. "Isn't there a chair in the room?"

Doctor Spott bounced to his feet, jolting the bed and Roger's aching feverish head with it. The sick man frowned.

"Not quite himself, as you observe," said the doctor. "At least we will hope so. But there's a lot of ingratitude in the world."

"He do seem to have woke up less friendly," said Mrs. Martin.

"How is he to-night?" asked Julia.

"Rather fractious," said the doctor.

He had Roger's injured hand between his own, and was causing him considerable pain. There were three people round the bed, and the low-roofed little room seemed crowded with them. Roger made no sound, but he suddenly went very white and shut his eyes. The woman screamed, the doctor looked up.

"He has fainted," he said; "he'll soon come to. I shan't bandage this hand again. It isn't necessary."

When Roger regained consciousness the girl was still in the room. Mrs. Martin and Dr. Spott had gone.

"You did give me a fright," she said.

She gave Roger a fright as she spoke, because she came towards the bed, and he thought she was going to kiss him again. He hurriedly tried to draw her into conversation.

"Where does that doctor come from?" he asked.

"From Rockmouth," said Julia. "He be very clever."

"He doesn't look clever. I don't believe he knows anything about my hand. If I'm not right in a day or two I'll have a second opinion."

The girl stared.

"Doctors cost a sight of money," she reminded him.

Roger made no reply. He still felt too weak for any discussion. But next day he felt a good deal better, and the day after that better still. His hand was healing well. A fresh wind came along, bringing rain with it, and driving away the flies. Roger listened to the pleasant patter of it, and gradually came to himself again. At intervals the woman he now called Mrs. Martin and her daughter Julia came in with food, but he did not encourage them to talk or stay long. He had asked one or two questions and received unsatisfactory answers, and, for some reason he did not understand, both women turned uncommunicative when he tried to find out why he had been brought here and what their circumstances were. He gathered that he was in a farmhouse of a poor class, and that the mother and daughter were at work all day and short of money. But he could not make out why the girl's manner should alternate between reproachful affection and primitive sulks. Another little thing that troubled him was his ten days' beard. He could feel it short and scrubby all over his chin, and on the third day after the doctor's visit, when he really felt much better, he asked Mrs. Martin to send for a barber.

"There bain't one to Trevalla," said Mrs. Martin; "he'd never pick up a living. Our men mostly grow a beard—or shave themselves."

"I shave myself," said Roger; "but I can't while my hand is lame. Your daughter tells me my things

are here, Mrs. Martin. Will you give me my dressing-case?"

Mrs. Martin stared at him and went out of the room. A moment later Julia came in and dived under the bed, reappearing with a small, shabby black bag.

"Here be your bag," she said; "but there be nothing inside, only a pair of old socks as I haven't had time to mend."

Roger looked at the bag with repudiation in every line of his astonished face.

"You don't mean to say they gave you that thing at the Swan!" he cried.

The girl started, as if he had scared her, and she put the bag on the floor again.

"You'm not so well to-day," she said. "You lie down again and go to sleep."

"My dear Miss Martin," said Roger, angrily; then he stopped in amazement because the girl began to cry.

"You've woke up so different," she said. "You'm so unkind now."

This explains everything, thought Roger, aghast. For a whole week he had been unconscious, irresponsible, for all he knew delirious—and, as the girl said, different.

"When a man's ill he's apt to talk nonsense," he said. "I suppose I did."

"I like 'e better ill than well," sobbed the girl. Her grief, like her beauty, was too unrestrained—the one to please Roger's fastidious taste, the other to make an effective appeal to his pity.

"Well—don't cry," he said kindly. "I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you for taking such good care of me; and if you'll tell me where my clothes are I'll get up. To-morrow or the day after I'll drive into Rockmouth, and see about my things myself."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that," said Julia; "it frightens mother, and it frightens me when you seem so comical."

"What frightens you?"

"The nonsense you talk about your bag and not

knowing our names, and calling me Miss Martin and all. We didn't mind it when you were silly, but we do now."

"What do you want me to call you?"

"Julia, of course. Bain't us goin' to be married?"

"Good heavens!" cried Roger. "What makes you think so?"

The girl sat down on the edge of the bed and sobbed loudly into her handkerchief.

"I believe you've forgotten all about it," she said as soon as she could speak.

"I'm sorry," said Roger. "You see, I was silly, as you call it, and I suppose I didn't know what I was saying."

"But now that you're sensible, don't you want to marry me?"

It was an awkward question awkwardly put, thought Roger. He was anxious not to hurt the girl's feelings, but any idea of a serious entanglement was out of the question.

"We'll discuss that when I'm better," he said. "I wish you'd tell me where my clothes are now. I want to get up."

Julia went to the little painted chest of drawers, opened the lower one, took a pile of clothes from it, and brought them to the bed.

"What are these?" said Roger, eyeing them as he had eyed the bag.

The girl's sobs, which were beginning to get badly on his nerves, broke out with renewed violence.

"No wonder you don't know we'm keeping company," she said, "when you don't know your own clothes and your own bag. You've forgotten everything."

"Either you are mad or I am," said Roger.

He lay back on his pillow and stared at the clothes. There was a pink flannelette shirt with frayed wristbands and a reach-me-down tweed suit sadly the worse for wear. The pink shirt was checked, offensively checked with yellow. Somewhere—sometime—he had seen it before.

"Where do you say these were found?" he asked.

"On the shore in Coffin Bay—where you left them," said Julia, and fell to crying again. His face, his voice, frightened her now.

"Where—I—left—them?" he said slowly to himself rather than to her.

The girl nodded. Roger sought for the truth, and was suddenly startled out of all composure by a vivid memory of Mr. Gammage. He sat up, and his eyes were hard and angry as he thrust the clothes from him.

"They are not mine," he said.

"Oh, Bert!" wailed the girl.

"My name is not Bert," said Roger Blois.

XI

WHEN Julia rushed into the kitchen, tear-stained and vociferous, she found that Dr. Spott had arrived. He was having a little lunch before going up to see his patient, and he went on with it while Julia told her tale.

"He be getting up," she cried. "He says they'm not his clothes. He says he isn't Bert. He says we'm not engaged. Oh dear! Oh dear! Can't you cure him, doctor?"

With a magisterial countenance Dr. Spott helped himself to more cheese.

"Does he seem excited?" he asked.

"He didn't shout or swear," said Julia, thinking of Mr. Martin's ways when annoyed. "He turned very white when I give him the clothes, and looked at 'em very black."

"H—m," said the doctor.

"I wonder if Cuticura would do him good," said Mrs. Martin; "it suits me in the spring."

Doctor Spott shook his head and pursed up his lips. He then began to cross-examine Julia with a purposeful air that impressed and vaguely consoled her. Dr. Spott knew very little about disease, but he knew something about rather silly women, and it

is an open question whether this branch of knowledge was not as useful to his pocket as the other would have been.

"You were engaged to be married?" he asked. "Let me have the whole story, if you please, from beginning to end."

So Julia went into all the circumstances of her betrothal, even showing Dr. Spott the pearl necklace that Mr. Gammage had bought for her in Rockmouth. He said it might prove a useful link, and that he would afterwards take it upstairs with him.

"Has the young man any means?" he asked.

"Not a brass farden, I should say," replied Mrs. Martin. "There was a little money in his pockets, but I've spent that on the wire and beef-tea you've ordered. I never can get a shilling out o' Martin."

"Bert was earning good money, and will again," said Julia, who saw the doctor's face fall. "He was in business in London."

"Has he no friends or family?"

"He've no family. He've friends who's cousins of ours. We telegraphed to tell them he was drowned, and then we wrote to say it was a mistake, and we got a very glumpy letter back——"

"They was vexed," put in Mrs. Martin; "offered to send his things here, and mentioned that a gentleman called Salter would occupy his room in future."

"We didn't tell them how ill he was," said Julia, who had an honest soul. "I wrote the same night and told 'em that he was alive but not well enough to travel, and that he and me were going to be married. You see, he lodged with our cousins, and there is a daughter about my age—Florrie her name is—and mother fancies——"

"Well," said Dr. Spott, who had now finished his lunch, "I'll have a look at him."

He had the necklace in his hands when he went into the bedroom where Roger was now sitting by the window dressed in Mr. Gammage's clothes.

Roger was disfigured by a ten days' beard, he looked

thin and weak and pale. But no accidents of fortune could take from him the distinction of speech and manner his cousin lacked. Dr. Spott was not inclined to like his patient. He objected to the air of a gentleman without money to support it; and there was an ironical glance now and then in Roger's eyes that he understood and resented. It had annoyed him the other evening when he was trying to impress Mrs. Martin in his favourite double part of magician and high priest.

The doctor went into the room with the pearl necklace dangling from his hand. He sat down opposite Roger and said he was glad to see him up and dressed. Roger made some suitable reply but did not seem much inclined to talk.

"You'll be about again in a day or two," said Dr. Spott. "But it's a bad job about your hand; that is if you clerk for your living. Miss Julia tells me you're in business in London."

"I've never been in London," said Roger. "I've just arrived from Australia."

Dr. Spott never allowed himself to be surprised. Whatever happened he had invariably expected. He now took from his pocket a Swan pen and an old envelope.

"Oblige me by writing your name," he said.

Roger, with considerable difficulty, wrote his name in characters so illegible that he looked at them in dismay.

"I can't write," he muttered.

"I told you how it would be. Let me have a look."

Roger handed the doctor the envelope.

"What's this?" he said.

"My name," said Roger.

"Ever hear of Mr. Herbert Gammage?"

"Yes," said Roger, savagely; "I want to hear of him again."

The doctor dangled the necklace to and fro in front of his patient's eyes.

"Ever seen this?" he asked.

"Often. On Miss Martin's neck."

"Why Miss Martin?"

"Why not?"

"She calls you Bert—her dear Bert."

"I wish she wouldn't," said Roger.

"What should she call you?"

"My name is Roger Blois."

The doctor shook his head and mumbled something about hallucinations. Roger looked at him, and perhaps his glance unwisely expressed the dislike and distrust he felt.

"I met this Herbert Gammage in Coffin Bay," he said curtly. "He must have got into my clothes while I was swimming. Our fathers were cousins. I discovered a—superficially—we were very much alike."

"Ever had any trouble of this kind before?" said the doctor, blandly.

"There will be trouble between you and me directly," said Roger, his gaunt face set hard in anger now. "I'm not going to answer any more of your questions, and I will dispense with your visits in future. Let me know what I owe you, and you shall have a cheque."

"A cheque! a cheque!" spluttered the doctor, the veins of his forehead swelling with offence and rage. "You Cockney beggar. I suppose you think you're the Emperor of China or Vanderbilt. What you want is a strait-waistcoat."

"This is my room," said Roger, rising to his feet, "get out of it."

The doctor retreated hastily from the angry looking man who now edged him towards the door. He was still quivering with wrath when he re-entered the kitchen and threw the pearl necklace on the table.

"Is he better?" asked Julia, tearfully.

"He'll be right enough in a day or two," said the doctor, "as regards his body."

"Oh!" cried Julia. "Doesn't he know he's Bert yet? Couldn't you make him understand?"

"My dear Miss Julia," said the doctor, soothed down at once by the girl's appeal to his power. "Even I am not omnipotent. Let me explain now. Suppose your head received a severe blow? It would probably be injured. You follow that, don't you?"

Julia thought she did.

"Now an injury to the brain is not like a cut on your finger. You can't cure it with sticking plaister, because you can't reach it in that way. You understand?"

Julia waited patiently until the doctor stopped to take breath.

"When will he be all right again?" she asked then, for that was what concerned her. Puerile explanations did not.

"I'll tell you next time I see him," said Dr. Spott.

"What did he say to you?"

"Told me some cock-and-bull story about meeting a cousin in Coffin Bay."

"But maybe he did," said Julia, "maybe that's how he gets his idea about the Swan at Rockmouth."

"What idea?"

"He thinks he has a dressing-case there and clothes. Poor Bert! He's wearing all the clothes he brought with him."

"Quite possible," said Dr. Spott, sagely. "He may have met some one just before his accident, and this hallucination about an exchange of personalities may arise out of that chance encounter. I should not be at all surprised. In fact, I expected something of the kind from the first. I'll see the landlord of the Swan to-morrow, and ask him a few questions. I shall come again on Monday, and bring my brother-in-law, Dr. Muggeridge, with me. Then we will tell you what is best to be done. You are sure the young man has no friends?"

"No one but us and our cousins at Barnes, and they seem to have fallen out with him."

"Well, if this is going to be a long business, we must try to fix up something. Your father won't want him here for ever."

The girl fidgeted nervously with her fingers and spoke in a shamefaced way.

"I'm scared to go near him," she said; "our cowman's father was daft with drink at Easter, and he ran at folks with a pitchfork."

"This is an entirely different case," said Dr. Spott. "There is no danger—at present. The first stages of the disease are often marked by unusual quietness and amiability. I want you to behave just as usual to him, and perhaps you had better not mention that I am coming on Monday. He seems to have taken a dislike to me. I am not surprised. These unreasonable symptoms are quite in the regular course."

Julia believed blindly in her medicine man, but it was evening before she summoned up courage to approach Roger again. He was sitting at the window which had a view of the sea, and though the sunset sky was rosy, and the swallows were busy, he looked as if nothing in the landscape could delight him. He had been eating his heart out all day in weakness, anger, and anxiety, and when Julia appeared, he felt eager to talk to her. He had tried to question Mrs. Martin when she brought him his dinner, but he could get nothing from her but a vacant stare and an exhortation not to worry.

"Come in, Miss Martin," said Roger, for the girl stood doubtfully in the open doorway. At his invitation she advanced towards the window.

"I want you to write a couple of letters for me," he went on—"will you do it?"

"What sort of letters?" asked Julia.

"One will be to a bank, and one to the people who are expecting me to stay with them. I must sign them as well as I can, but I'm afraid no one will recognize my signature."

He held out the envelope on which he had written Roger Blois. The girl took it from him and looked at it.

"If you're this man, where is my Bert?" she said.

"That is what I have to find out," said Roger.

Julia looked at him searchingly. She had only known her Bert two days, and she was not an observant girl. The superficial resemblance between the two men was amazing—as amazing and perplexing as it sometimes is between twins. The girl saw the same clothes and, to all intents and purposes, the same man. The man was a little paler, a good deal sterner, disfigured by a ten days' beard, and he did not speak like Bert. In some ways she liked him better since his illness; yet she felt herself set further from him.

"Did Dr. Spott tell you that I met Mr. Gammage in Coffin Bay?" pursued Roger. "We are actually second cousins. I meant to help him."

The extent to which Mr. Gammage had probably helped himself by this time crossed Roger's mind like a flame and checked further speech.

"Dr. Spott calls it a hallermination, which is Greek for nonsense," said Julia, sullenly. "He says he won't deny you met some one, and now you think you'm him."

"If only I could write," said Roger; "and I ought to send two telegrams at once. But I can find no money. My pockets are empty."

"'Twas mother emptied them," said Julia, simply. "Faither won't give her a sixpence, and she has had to buy a lot o' things for you. She said 'twas only fair to use what you had as far as it would go."

"Certainly," said Roger. "But I suppose some of you can lend me a shilling for a couple of telegrams."

"I haven't a sixpence except in my china pig," said Julia, "and I wouldn't break that just for telegrams if it was ever so. Why won't letters do? I've got twopence for stamps."

"Do you believe my story?"

"How can I? Seein' is believin', isn't it? and there you sit as large as life. Oh, Bert, do leave off, and be yourself again."

Roger's face only darkened as the girl made this appeal. He felt sorry for her, but her blindness made his difficulties more serious than he had at first expected them to be. He had not thought of anything worse than the need of catching and punishing Mr. Gammage.

"Will you write the two letters for me?" he said.

"I must look if there be any ink in the house," said Julia, unwillingly.

She went away and came back with a small bottle of ink and some pink scalloped paper decorated with trails of blue forget-me-not. Roger suppressed his feelings at the sight of it, and waited for her to sit down.

"The ink bottle was empty," said Julia, "but I've put a drop of vinegar in, and stirred it with a skewer. You'll have to tell me how to spell the hard words—if you know yourself."

Roger had been meditating the terms in which he should address both Colonel Blois and the bank on which his letter of credit was drawn. He had to warn them of a possible impostor, and to do so in language that did not wound Julia's feelings too deeply. He was sorry enough to make her an intermediary, but he had no one else at hand, and there was no time to be lost. So in temperate phrases, that were far from expressing his feelings, he dictated a letter to his bankers, requesting them not to honour any draft presented in his name; and a letter to Colonel Blois, saying that he had had an accident but hoped to be at Greymarsh in about a week. He affixed his trembling and illegible signature to both documents, and wondered what his correspondents would think of Julia's stationery and Julia's writing. The spelling he had superintended and the transaction had been a slow one in consequence. When it was finished, Julia stared at the envelopes.

"If you were not Bert it wouldn't be very nice for him when these arrived," she said.

"That's his look out," said Roger. "He has walked

off with my clothes and name and money. There was a hundred pounds in my pocket-book."

"A hundred pounds!" said Julia, her face falling with fright. "Do you mean that Bert is a thief?"

Roger's gesture answered her. He did not speak.

"Would he have to go to prison?" the girl went on.

"He deserves to."

She shifted the letters uncertainly in her hands, looked at them, looked out of the window, murmured something about stamps, and left the room. It was nearly half an hour before she came back; the swallows were gone now, the sky starlit already, and the room almost dark. Roger felt rather than saw a little heap of paper scraps that Julia put into his hands.

"What are these?" he said in surprise.

"I could have burnt them," she said, and her voice showed both fear and agitation. "You'd never have known—and I nearly did—but that didn't seem fair either. But I've thought it all over, and I won't write no letters to colonels and bankers for you. If you're not Bert, they'd be enough to send him to prison."

Roger realized that he had wasted time, and that to-morrow he must find another secretary. But he smiled reassuringly at the girl.

"I believe you are right," he said; "I ought never to have asked you."

To his great distress and embarrassment, Julia, who had expected an outburst of anger, melted at his feet, got hold of his empty hand and covered it with passionate kisses.

"Oh, Bert, I thought you'd want to kill me," she said. "Feel how my heart beats."

"My dear girl," said Roger, helplessly, "I really am not Bert. I wish you'd believe it. If Bert was here, you know, he wouldn't like it."

"I don't care," said Julia, impulsively; "I like you."

XII

WHEN Roger found out the trick his kinsman had played on him he was angry, but at first it was a light anger. That he himself could be the victim of anything worse than a three days' farce did not seem possible. How can it be difficult out of a police court for a man to prove his own identity at any moment to everybody's satisfaction? You produce your friends, and they swear to you and to your signature. As it happened, Roger had no friends in England, unless he could count on Mrs. Bradwardine, his fellow-traveller. He must, of course, communicate with her. But when he thought of the pink scalloped paper and the forget-me-nots reaching that fastidious lady, he decided that he could not appeal to her on Julia's stationery. Each hour that passed made his predicament more serious and his anxiety more profound. He could not write, he was without a penny, and his neighbours regarded him as crazy. On Saturday, he tried to borrow a few shillings from Mr. Martin, and met with a rebuff. He told the surly farmer his true story, and saw it received with jeering incredulity. He talked to Mrs. Martin, and made no impression. They refused to lend him money or to write letters for him, or even to make inquiries at Rockmouth. They were busy and poor, and extremely stupid. They regarded him as a troublesome lunatic, whose maintenance bore heavily on them, and whose departure they desired. For three days Roger fumed and fretted over the waste of time caused by his hosts' attitude. His empty pockets and his bodily weakness paralyzed him. On Monday afternoon he found Julia in the poultry yard, and asked her if she would send a message for him to the Swan, at Rockmouth.

"What sort of a message?" asked Julia.

"About my things. He may not have gone off with them. They may still be there."

"Our cart goes to-morrow morning early."

"I want to send to-day. I have lost too much time as it is."

This was one of the moments when Julia half believed that the young man addressing her was not Bert. He spoke as one used to command, and that, with all his swagger, had not been Bert's way. Julia looked at him with admiration, and Roger wondered what he had done to rouse it.

"What you want is a few black slaves," she said. "There's no one here to send messages except the cowman's boy, young Billy Gannett, and he won't go for nothing."

Roger turned impatiently away, and managed to walk nearly as far as Coffin Bay that afternoon himself. Next day he determined he would reach Rockmouth if he had to crawl there.

When evening came and Julia's work was done, she put on her turquoise blouse and sought Roger in the garden. She was still persuaded that if she found him in the right mood she could coax him back to sanity and make him admit that he was Bert. For her doubts were only momentary. The alternative did not appeal to the astuteness on which, in common with most of her fellow-creatures, she prided herself. She found Roger sitting in the sheltered corner of the garden, where she had spent most of Whit-Sunday with Mr. Gammage.

"Better to-night?" she said cheerfully.

"Much better," said Roger. "I shall be all right in a day or two."

"I hope so," said Julia, with a sigh; and Roger felt her head touch his shoulder. He moved a little.

"What's the matter?" said she.

"Oh! nothing," said Roger. A man can't very well ask a girl not to put her head on his shoulder, especially when she has just nursed him tenderly through an illness.

"'Tisn't so dark here as it was in Rockmouth Park," said Julia. "The moon will soon be up."

"I suppose it will," said Roger, looking at the sea.

"I want to ask you a question," said Julia, after a little pause of disappointment. She had hoped her allusion to Rockmouth would touch some chord in his memory, and bring back the impassioned hour they had spent together.

"I hope I shall be able to answer it," said Roger.

"You won't be cross?"

"I think I may promise not to be cross."

"Was there ever anything between you and Florrie?"

"What Florrie?"

"Florrie Martin—my cousin—at Barnes."

"My dear girl, how should I know you had a cousin at Barnes? Where is Barnes?" said the Australian.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" moaned Julia, her head still on his shoulder; and the next moment Roger felt his hand seized in an affectionate grasp.

"'Tis no use your going back there, you know," the girl continued. "They've given your room to Mr. Salter, they say, an' how are you going to earn your living now you can't write?"

Roger remembered that Mr. Gammage had owned to being a clerk.

"I wish I could get up to London," he said. "Have you his business address?"

"If you've forgotten it I might get it from Florrie," said Julia.

"I wish you would."

"But you had a letter from London that Tuesday morning, and there seemed to be something upsetting in it—the one I wanted to see, and you wouldn't let me."

"It isn't in my pockets," said Roger, feeling in them.

"I know," said Julia. "You must have lost it or thrown it away that morning you went out. I can't think what you're going to do, Bert. Have you any idea yourself?"

"Yes, I have," said Roger grimly, and then he turned silent. He could not tell her that as soon as his feet would carry him he meant to go to the Rockmouth police, and put them on the trail of Mr. Gammage.

After a decent pause, he said he was tired and would go indoors now. Poor Julia walked beside him, very unhappy because she loved Bert better now than she had done before his accident, and she thought his love had unaccountably cooled. He seemed, in spite of his unvarying kindness, to keep her at arm's length, even when her head rested on his shoulder she had felt his irresponsiveness, and she had never dared to kiss him since he first came to his senses, if his present state of mind could be called sensible. She did not know what to hope or what to believe.

But next day the farm cart went to Rockmouth, and returned with a message from the Swan. A Mr. Blois had arrived there on Whit-Monday and had left next day, taking all his luggage with him. One of the passengers from the *Electric*, who had dined with him the night before, had travelled by the same train. Julia's doubts now resolved themselves into a conviction that Dr. Spott was right, and that poor Bert was crazy. The carter told her the landlord of the Swan had been very short with him, and said he knew all about the chap at Trevalla, because the doctor had been there yesterday plaguing him with questions. There was nothing at the Swan for any one of that kind.

Julia went slowly into the garden, dreading the effect of her news, and wishing she could withhold it, but the moment Roger saw her he asked eagerly if the cart was back.

"Yes, 'tis back," she said.

"Have they sent my things?"

Julia shook her head. Roger had braced himself to bear this blow; yet when it fell, for the moment it turned him dizzy.

"Then he has stolen them," he said to himself rather than to her. He stared in perplexity and anger at the sea.

"There was a Mr. Blois," said Julia. "But he left on Tuesday, and took his things with him. His fellow-passenger knew him, and travelled with him, the landlord says. Oh, Bert, can't I help you remember, and

be yourself again? What's the good of going on like this? It only makes every one think you'm crazy."

Roger shrugged his shoulders slightly, and walked away from the girl. His fix had now become a serious one, for the want of money hampered him at every turn. He made up his mind that he must go to Rockmouth at once, without the shave he so impatiently desired, and in the clothes that seemed to him only a little less grotesque and disfiguring than the clothes of a convict.

"I'm going to Rockmouth myself," he said, coming back to Julia, who had watched his brooding meditation in anxiety.

"What for? You'm not strong enough to walk both ways yet, and faither will never send the horse a second time."

"I am strong enough to do what is necessary," said Roger; and without further argument he started, wondering as he went along what sort of horror he must look with his sunken face and fourteen days' beard.

Perhaps it was his appearance that led a passing farmer to offer him a lift and take him within half a mile of the town. In spite of this luck, however, he felt weak and hot and dusty when he reached the police-station, and he saw in the face of the constable who received him a swift, disapproving register of his seedy outside.

"I have come here," he said, "to charge a man called Herbert Gammage with stealing my clothes from the shore and my trunks from the Swan. I want you to find him."

He made his story short because he knew he had no strength to tell a long one. His voice warned him, and the way things were beginning to go round. When he had spoken he sank on a bench and shut his eyes. The constable, a rustic dog in office, an underling both stupid and conceited, looked him over.

"Say that again," he ordered.

Roger, with a sense of exasperation, did so. He was sure the man had heard well enough the first time.

"How could he steal your trunks from the Swan?" said the constable. "If you were staying there, they would have knowed you."

"He was extraordinarily like me," said Roger, recognizing again how difficult it was to give his true story any semblance of truth.

"How did he get your clothes?"

"He stole them while I was in the water."

"Did you see him do it?"

"No. I was nearly drowned, and picked up by a fishing-boat. I've been a fortnight at Trevalla."

The constable rose.

"I'll come along to the Swan with 'e, and hear what Mr. Birch has to say," he vouchsafed. "I can't make head or tail of it. It's my belief the water's still in your brain—if you were ever in the water."

Roger staggered to his feet, and the two men left the police-station together. The hotel was only a few yards away, and Mr. Birch was standing at the front door. He looked up with surprise when the policeman approached him with a shabby-looking stranger in tow.

"Can we have a word with you?" said the policeman.

"Certainly," said Mr. Birch, as he led the way into the bar-parlour, which was empty.

The policeman then pointed to Roger.

"Know this young man?" he asked.

Mr. Birch looked more closely at Roger, seemed puzzled at first, but finally shook his head.

"It isn't him," he said. "At first I half thought it was—there's a something I seem to have seen before."

"Of course you have seen me before," broke in Roger, impatiently. But the landlord held up a remonstrating hand.

"The person I am alluding to is now doing time at Portland," he said, "for uttering false coin. I don't deny there's a likeness, but——"

"He says he slept in this hotel on Whit-Monday," put in the constable.

"I assure you I did," said Roger. "Don't you remember me? I came off the *Electric*. My name is Blois."

It was a moment heavy with anxiety for Roger, and his wan face showed the strain. He really did not look much like the prosperous gentleman who had arrived at the hotel on Monday night, and who had only been seen for a moment by the landlord as he stood in the hall. Mr. Birch glanced again at the young man's tawdry clothes, at his ungroomed face, and at his infirm carriage. Then he beckoned the constable aside.

"Take him away," he whispered; "take him back to Trevalla. I don't want a row on the premises. I'll give you half a crown if you get him off quietly."

"Why, what's up?" said the constable.

"He's a young chap that has been half drowned and knocked about against the rocks, and he's dotty. Dr. Spott has warned me about him. Why, that Mr. Blois he thinks he is went off to London with a lady he'd known on the *Electric*. I saw them drive off together myself."

"But how does this chap come to know anything about the other chap?" asked the constable, astutely.

"They met in Coffin Bay, and had a talk. That's right enough. Dr. Spott found out all about it, and says it is a queer case, but he can explain it to any one. He's going to lock him up if he doesn't get sensible, he says."

"Then he'd better do it," said the constable, "I don't see as I can. The poor chap hain't done anything against the law—so far."

"No," said Mr. Birch; "but I've no use for him in my hotel."

"He looks as if he could do with a meal," said the constable.

"What's that you're saying?" asked Roger, coming towards them. "I know this man has gone off with my property, Mr. Birch, but I don't want to get you into trouble provided——"

The landlord turned on him purple with anger.

"Get me into trouble," he repeated. "You keep out of trouble yourself, young fellow. That's all you've got to do."

"What!" said Roger, his eyes ablaze with anger at the man's insolent tone.

"Quiet—quiet," said the constable, and taking Roger by the arm he edged him towards the door.

"Do you mean to say you don't know me?" cried Roger, addressing the landlord again. "I'll find out what the law of the matter is before I'm a day older. I'll sue you for letting a damned thief carry off my property. I'll charge you with gross neglect—I'll——"

"Will you come peaceable?" said the constable, losing his patience.

"Let go, you fool," said Roger, losing his at the same moment, and trying to wrench his arm from the man's grasp. But he had no strength yet for such a tussle, and when the landlord of the Swan came to the constable's assistance, Roger was helpless. A moment later he was handcuffed.

"I'm stretching a point," said the policeman; "but from information I've received it's safer for you and safer for me. Now we'll walk past the police station and report, and then I'll see you to Trevalla."

XIII

"IF you try to take me through the town like this, I'll raise hell," said Roger, and he spoke with a deadly quietness that was convincing. The set of his jaw found no counterpart in the beefy faces on either side of him, and their wills wavered before his.

"Will you promise to go straight back to Trevalla?" said the policeman.

"Of course I'm going back to Trevalla," said Roger. "Where else should I go? I haven't a penny till this scoundrel is caught."

"I tell you what," said the landlord, "one of my traps is going past Trevalla to fetch some ladies from

the White Cottage. I'll send you back in it. You don't look like walking."

"I don't feel like it," owned Roger. He sat down as he spoke, because his moment of excitement had passed now and left him weaker than before. The policeman removed the handcuffs, and put them back into his pocket.

"A whisky and soda and something to eat is what you want," said the landlord, eyeing Roger with mingled compassion and disfavour.

"I should be much obliged for both," said Roger, and though his words conveyed no promise of future payment, his matter-of-fact manner did.

"I must get back to the station," said the policeman.

"What are you going to do about my charge?" said Roger.

The man shuffled uneasily towards the door. He did not want to create another disturbance with this person of unsound mind and most inconvenient pertinacity.

"I'll consult the inspector," he said; "I'll see him to-morrow."

"I'll see him to-day," said Roger.

"You can't. He's off duty till to-night."

"And you are left in charge?"

The man nodded, and wished he knew how to resent being called a fool by an ironical glance, and not in words.

"I've a lot to do, too," he said impatiently. "I can't waste any more time over you."

The landlord went out of the room with him, and in a little while a maidservant brought Roger a tray on which there was bread and meat and a glass of whisky and soda.

"Feeling better now?" said Mr. Birch, coming back later and seeing the empty plate and glass.

"Much better," said Roger. He leaned back in his chair and faced his host. "You are quite sure you don't recognize me?" he said.

"Quite sure," said Mr. Birch.

"Perhaps some of your servants would."

"You've seen the one who had most to do with the other gentleman. Found in his room, she was, helping him to pack. My wife had a few words with her in consequence. However, I sent her in with your tray to have a look at you."

"What did she say?" asked Roger, anxiously. He had not noticed the girl or recognized her.

"Said she'd take her oath anywhere she'd never seen you before. Said the gentleman she had a row about was a handsome gentleman, and very affable. That's what she said directly. When I asked her if it could have been you who came here on Whit-Monday, she laughed."

Roger groaned. He had not looked up when the girl came in, and he understood that she had glanced at a glum, angry man, unshaved, badly dressed, and haggard with weakness and fatigue.

"Can I speak to her?" he said.

"Another day with pleasure," said the landlord, pacifically. "I've just sent her to the other end of the town on an errand, and the trap is waiting. It has to be at the White Cottage by three."

Considering how entirely appearances were against him, Roger thought Mr. Birch had treated him pretty well, and he said so as he climbed into the trap. On the way back to Trevalla he hardly spoke, and when he got to the farm he went straight upstairs to his room. No one disturbed him, and he slept like a log till sunset, awaking much strengthened and refreshed. He sat down at once, and tried as he had tried day after day for nearly a week now, to write a few sentences, either with his right hand or his left, that should be legible. But he still failed entirely. He wondered whether, if he returned to Rockmouth to-morrow, Mr. Birch could be persuaded to write for him. He did not think it at all likely, and there was no one available in the scattered village of Trevalla, no one at least that he could employ without reward.

"Where is your father?" he said, going down to Julia in the kitchen. "I must ask him again to lend

me a little money. I must send some telegrams and get some letters written. I must get out of this."

"Faither won't lend you a shilling," said Julia. "He's that angry with mother and me. He wants to know who'll pay Dr. Spott and that other doctor he's bringing down along to-night."

"What's that?" said Roger, quickly. "I told Dr. Spott not to come near me again. I don't believe in him."

"He be coming to-night and bringing Dr. Muggeridge with him."

"Who's Dr. Muggeridge?"

"He married Miss Spott as was—but he'm an old gentleman. He's been married three times."

"Where's your father?" said Roger.

"In the yard. But I wish you wouldn't plague him. He's in that temper he'll turn you out of the house as soon as look at you; and what'd you do then, Bert—without a penny?"

"Has your father threatened to turn me out of the house?"

Again Julia did not recognize her lover in the determined-looking man waiting quietly for her answer. She tried to wriggle away from her admission, and found it impossible. In less than half a minute she had confessed with downcast eyes that her father wanted to get rid of him.

"I forgot to feed the calves last night through sitting with you," she said. "But faither will come round, I shouldn't wonder, if you keep out of his way. Only you don't want to vex him by asking for money."

"Is there a magistrate near here, or a clergyman?" asked Roger, after a moment's meditation. "I haven't seen a church in the village."

"There isn't one. We go to Trimaton, a mile and more from here."

"Who is at Trimaton?"

"Only old Squire Bolitho, and he's scranny."

"Scranny?"

"Daft—stone deaf—nearly ninety."

"Is he the magistrate or the parson?"

"He be the parson. I don't know anything about magistrates. I thought they were at Rockmouth, and sent people to prison. There's Dr. Spott and Dr. Muggeridge. You'll have to see them now. I'll show them into the parlour."

Roger's manner did not make the two doctors welcome as he went into the parlour and bid them good evening. He disliked Dr. Spott, and he could not conceive why he brought a second opinion when his patient was convalescent, and had actually dismissed him. The second opinion did not at first sight attract Roger either. Dr. Muggeridge was a pinched, fretful-looking man with grey mutton-chop whiskers and a receding chin. He hung behind his burly brother-in-law, and looked at his patient as if he expected him to bite.

"This is Dr. Muggeridge," said Dr. Spott, in the tone of genial familiarity that had a freezing effect on Roger. "I want you to tell him your funny little story about being changed in your bath . . . or was it at sea? or in the train as you travelled down?"

Roger looked steadily at the man's inflamed face.

"I'm afraid you've been drinking," he said.

Dr. Spott turned to his colleague.

"Quarrelsome," he said, pursing his lips and nodding his head. "Never mind, we'll get at it another way."

"I've been to the Swan," he went on, now addressing Roger, "and I've interviewed the landlord. He answered all my questions, and his evidence has made the case quite plain to me. It all happened just as I expected."

Here he put one hand on each knee, leaned forward, and fixed Roger with his unimpressive eyes.

"That story of yours is half truth and half sheer nonsense," he said. "Now, I'll tell you where the truth ends and the nonsense begins. You did go down to Coffin Bay on Whit-Tuesday——"

"Stop," interrupted Roger. "I haven't asked your opinion of my affairs, and, to tell you the truth,

it doesn't interest me. I believe I've asked you once to consider me cured."

"But we want to hear your funny little story," said Dr. Muggeridge, in his high falsetto voice. "Are you going to tell it, or are you not?"

"I am not," said Roger.

"Oh, come now, my dear Mr. Gammage——"

"I am not Mr. Gammage."

"Now we're getting on," said Dr. Spott. "I thought we should in time."

"Who are you?" said Dr. Muggeridge.

"My name is Blois."

"What makes you think so?" said Dr. Spott.

"What makes you think your name is Spott?" said Roger.

That annoyed the doctor. The veins swelled on his forehead, and he half rose from the horsehair sofa on which he was sitting.

"Aren't you satisfied?" he said, turning to Dr. Muggeridge. "Do you want to ask any more questions?"

"I should like to ask a few more," said Dr. Muggeridge, pottering with a note-book and pencil. "I make it a rule to be most careful in these cases. What is our patient's age and occupation? Has he suffered in the same way before?"

Dr. Spott left it to the patient to answer, but Roger preserved a frigid silence.

"I don't altogether like his eyes," whispered Dr. Muggeridge to his brother-in-law.

"What does all this mean?" said Roger suddenly to Dr. Spott. "Why have you brought this gentleman?"

"You'll know in good time," said Dr. Spott, in the oily manner he considered soothing.

"I'll know now if you please," said Roger.

The two doctors glanced at each other in visible embarrassment. Dr. Muggeridge fumbled with his note-book, and Dr. Spott brought out a coloured handkerchief and blew his nose loudly.

"You're not so well as you think you are," he said at last to Roger—"that's the long and the short of it. I'm not satisfied, and I've great faith in Dr. Muggeridge. Next to myself, in fact, I believe in him. It is merely a matter of skilful diagnosis. If he agrees with me about your symptoms, we shall agree about the treatment."

"Then why don't you inquire into the symptoms?"

"My dear sir, have you had a medical education and a large medical experience? No. Then what can you possibly know of medical cross-examination . . . of the way in which every day of our lives we arrive at the most recondite facts?"

"Bless me," said Roger, losing his patience, "do you think every one who isn't a doctor is a fool?"

"Not at all, not at all," said Dr. Muggeridge, evidently anxious to appease and coax; "but before I prescribe for a patient I prefer to discover his malady . . . when I can."

"There is no malady to discover," said Roger, firmly. "I have been suffering from concussion of the brain, and am now very nearly all right again."

"But you still think you're some one else, don't you?" said Dr. Muggeridge, lucidly. "You've admitted it."

"We will not discuss the matter, if you please," said Roger. He got up as he spoke, and his action was equivalent to a dismissal. But the two doctors did not move.

"You know a Mr. Blois did stay at the Swan on Whit-Monday," said Dr. Spott, talking to his brother-in-law as if Roger were not present. "I have made out the whole affair. He asked the way to Coffin Bay, and walked there and back. You see what happened. The two young men met and had a little talk, told each other their names and so on—it's a curious case—I believe Dr. Beltravers . . ."

Roger took a step forward. Something in Dr. Spott's confidence of manner disturbed him, his indifference to his presence stung him like an outrage. The two dull-witted, ill-mannered men began to strike terror

into Roger, just as the lowest officers of the law may when armed by the irresistible force they represent.

"Who is Dr. Beltravers?" he asked sternly.

"A third opinion," said Dr. Spott; "we think you ought to consult him. But he is too busy to come here. We should have to ask you to drive to his house with us."

"I am not going to drive anywhere with you," said Roger.

"We'll see about that directly," said Dr. Spott.

Roger took another step towards the sofa, and as he did so he saw genuine fear in both men's faces. Dr. Spott stumbled hastily to his feet, and Dr. Muggeridge shrank into his corner of the sofa and pulled a heavy mahogany table closer to him.

"Why are you squaring your elbows in that absurd way?" said Roger to Dr. Spott. "You ought to know that, with all the will in the world, I haven't the strength to tackle two of you yet."

"People in your state of mind are sometimes impulsive," said Dr. Spott, significantly.

"Do you feel any inclination to fly at me and my friend?" quavered Dr. Muggeridge.

"I restrain it," said Roger, with politeness, "but perhaps it would be wise not to tax my self-control much longer. That table is in your way, I think."

He suddenly pulled the table aside and pointed peremptorily to the door.

"But I haven't asked him any of the proper questions yet," complained Dr. Muggeridge to his brother-in-law. "They are all down in my note-book, but he won't answer, will he? We ought to have begun with the multiplication table and gone on——"

"Aren't you satisfied?" growled Dr. Spott, and as he spoke he got behind Roger and stealthily seized him by the collar of his coat.

Roger twisted round in a fury, and delivered a well-directed blow at the doctor's chest. Dr. Muggeridge shrieked for help, picked up a poker and went to his friend's assistance. The Martins, hearing the

shivaree, rushed in from the kitchen, and found Roger in the act of tripping up Dr. Spott, while Dr. Muggeridge danced round both men and brandished a poker.

"Help, help," he cried. "Tie his hands. Get some rope. We shall all be murdered."

XIV

THE scene that ensued was one of wild and noisy confusion. Dr. Spott swore and wriggled, Dr. Muggeridge issued directions, the women screamed, and Mr. Martin advanced as if he only half liked the job. Roger, of course, knew that he had no chance if the three men combined against him, so he made straight for the door before Dr. Spott had managed to find his feet. Dr. Muggeridge made some feeble attempt to stop him, and was contemptuously flung aside. The kitchen was just opposite the parlour, and Roger went in there, took down the farmer's gun from behind the door, and appeared with it on the threshold. The parlour door was open, and five flustered faces confronted him.

"Take yourself off and your friend with you," he said to Dr. Spott.

"That gun bain't loaded," said the farmer.

"I'll use the butt end of it if any one tries to touch me," said Roger.

He looked a grim and tragic figure standing there. The two women clung to the farmer and implored him to come away. Dr. Spott ill-temperedly set his disordered clothes to rights. Dr. Muggeridge blamed his brother-in-law for provoking their patient.

"I warned you," he said in his high voice. "The moment I saw him I diagnosed him dangerous. My intuition——"

"Damn you and your intuition," snarled Dr. Spott. "If you had helped me overpower him you might talk. What are we to do now? Leave him to run amok?"

The two doctors drew together, and a whispered consultation followed. Roger caught the name of

Beltravers more than once, but he could not hear what was being hatched. Suddenly Dr. Spott shut the parlour door, and locked it from inside. A hum of voices followed, and the sound of women crying—a piteous sound in Roger's ears. Then it seemed as if they were shifting furniture, and then Roger heard cautious footsteps on the gravel outside. He watched the front door warily, but no one came in by it. Presently he heard voices in the road, and then the wheels of Dr. Spott's dog-cart driving away. He, at any rate had departed.

Roger put the gun back into its usual place, and knocked at the parlour door. No one answered him. He knocked a second time, then went out by the front door, and looked in at the wide-open window. The room was empty. The Martins, as well as the two doctors, had escaped in this way, and the Martins were evidently hiding from a man they believed to be insane. Roger scented a danger that he must fly as he would have fled from murder. The two doctors—one so vain, and both so stupid—threatened him with a fate more sinister than death. He did not know how far their power reached, or what higher powers he could invoke; but he felt sure that they might imprison him in a madhouse for a time, and he suspected that once inside such a place no man could hurry out again. He was tired and hungry, but he hardly felt these primitive needs of the body, so intent and gloomy was his preoccupation. With some idea of seeking the Martins and reassuring them, he turned into a deep, narrow lane leading to the cowman's cottage—a lush fernery with a trickle of water down one side of it. The hedges high above his head were covered with wild roses, and fox-gloves were flowering amongst the ferns. The birds were singing in a frenzy, carrying to human ears their yearly message of hope and joy. Like a low, unbroken bass to their treble, Roger heard in the distance the murmur of the sea. The tragic contrast that has hurt every afflicted soul hurt Roger now, as he leaned against the

bank, comforted by the earth and its creatures, but sorely offended by his fellow-men. As he waited there, his eyes fixed on the ground, he heard footsteps just beyond a turn in the lane. He looked up and saw Julia, chap-fallen with fear, poised for flight, yet evidently uncertain of escape.

"There is nothing to be afraid of, Julia," he said.

"Where be the gun?" she gasped.

"In its place behind the kitchen door. Have your father and mother gone back to the house?"

"They won't. They say you'll shoot 'em."

"Where are they?"

"Locked up in Gannet's cottage. They mean to stay there till——"

The girl checked herself.

"Where were you going?" said Roger.

His voice was so level and his manner so quiet that he half reassured her. She came a little nearer, like a cautious robin you entice with food.

"I was going to whistle for Dan," she said. "Then I was going to feed my hens. I didn't think you'd see me."

"Was Dan to protect you against me?"

The girl coloured uncomfortably.

"I didn't suppose you'd see me," she said. "But Dan would fly at any one who——"

She could not finish. Roger's glance made her foolish.

"You've brought a terrible lot of trouble on us, Bert," she said in self-defence.

"I'm afraid I have," said Roger, with contrition.

"But, of course, you can't help it."

Roger, who had been looking away from the girl, turned swiftly.

"Who is Dr. Beltravers?" he asked.

"He's at the big asylum down to Rockmouth. They took Gannet's father there at Easter. Once you get in, folks say you never come out alive."

"Does Dr. Spott propose to take me there?" said Roger.

His quietness misled the girl. She did not gauge the anger and icy dread it covered.

"You don't know what it's like," she said in horror-stricken tones. "I'd sooner die than go."

"I suppose I should get out again," said Roger to himself, rather than to her.

"Never," asseverated Julia; "them as goes in never comes out—faither says so. He was against it."

"Against what?"

Julia, who by this time had crept quite close to him, suddenly caught his arm and hid her tear-stained face on his coat.

"They'm coming for you, so quick as they can," she panted. "I'll never set eyes on 'e again, and we'll never be married. Oh dear, oh dear, Bert."

"What do you mean by as quick as they can?" asked Roger.

"I oughtn't to tell you, I don't suppose," said Julia.

Roger did not try to persuade her. She had told him enough. As he leant against the bank, passively supporting the weeping girl, he weighed his chances of escape, and from one point of view they were small. On foot and penniless he would soon be overtaken if his pursuers were determined. But perhaps if he vanished quietly no one would trouble much about him. Even Dr. Spott would probably not go any great lengths to secure a man who must be a charge on the parish. He pulled himself together.

"I am going indoors," he said to Julia.

"They can't be here for a good hour," she whispered, as if she guessed his thoughts.

Roger, sustaining a little shock of consolation and surprise, took her two hands in his.

"You good girl," he said, "are you going to help me?"

"Faither says you'm quite harmless so long as you'm let alone," said she. "He hates Dr. Spott. So do I now. Why couldn't he let us alone? We were getting on very well."

"I'm not mad, Julia."

"But you think you'm not Bert?"

"Look at me. Listen to my voice. Don't you see, don't you hear that I'm not Bert?"

The girl's eyes were compelled to his, and Roger was distressed and touched to find them passionately adoring him.

"Sometimes I know you'm Bert," she said, "sometimes I don't. Your voice is different, but Dr. Spott says that's your illness. You're harder like about the mouth, and your eyes look at me different. But you can't be any one else, though. It's impossible. That gentleman you think is you travelled to London with friends. Dr. Spott says you got knocked silly against the rocks, and think you'm the last person you saw."

"My dear girl," said Roger, "if you, who love Bert, can take me for him, don't you see that one of my travelling companions might take him for me."

"Bert isn't wicked," said the girl, obstinately. "I hate your story, because it makes out Bert to be wicked. I wouldn't believe it for anything you could give me."

Roger was silent. He could not convince this kind muddle-headed creature without hurting her, and that he now forbore to do, as he had forborne before.

"I have no time to lose," he said. "Give me some food, Julia, before I go."

"Oh!" she cried, "whether you stay or whether you go, after to-night I shall never see you again."

"You shall see Bert again if I find him," promised Roger.

They walked back to the house together, and while Julia fetched him some food Roger hastily put a few necessaries into Mr. Gammage's little black bag. As he closed it Julia entered the room with a tray in her hands, and under one arm an object Roger did not at first identify. He drank the milk she brought, stuffed the bread and cheese into his pocket, and seemed about to go when Julia detained him.

"I've brought you my pig," she said, with the manner of one who takes a desperate step.

"Your pig?" Roger looked at the china figure she now set on the table.

" 'Tis full of money," she said. " I've had it for years. There's the sovereign in it faither gave me on Coronation Day, and there's half-crowns and shillings and coppers. I never thought I'd give away my pig, but I was going to spend it going to London with you, so it would have been spent just as much if all this trouble had never come upon us. I couldn't sleep sound if I knew you was wandering over the country without a penny to buy bread."

Roger took the heavy money-box into his hands and found it was so full that it hardly rattled. He thanked Julia with a few words, and was just going to smash the pig when the sound of voices below disturbed them. Both the man and the girl flew to the door, and Roger locked it.

" They've come back," said Roger. " I hear Spott's voice. What has happened ? "

Julia could hardly speak for terror and excitement.

" If they could get two men at Arbour Farm they wouldn't go so far as Rockmouth," she managed to say after a struggle for breath. " I never thought they'd come. Faither and Gannet both said they'd not meddle with you."

Roger refrained from uttering the reproach that rose to his lips. She had not told him it might be a matter of minutes instead of hours. His bedroom was at the back of the house, above the long low dairy. From there in three minutes he could reach a road leading up to Trevaila moor, and he meant to start in that direction. He went to the door and put the key in his pocket.

" What are you doing ? " said Julia, in surprise.

" Don't speak when they come," he said hurriedly. " Do me that last service, Julia. Don't let them persuade you to speak. They will think I'm locked in here. By the time they burst the door open I shall be well away. If I hear their wheels I'll hide in a lane or a ditch."

" But why do you take the key ? "

" Because if they frighten you into speaking, they'll bully you into opening the door."

"I won't make a sound," said Julia.

Her pretty commonplace face was transfigured as she lifted it to his. For the first time, as they stood together at the window, Roger kissed her.

"I'll trust you," said Roger, as he gave her back the key. "Now be quick. Tie a corner of the sheet to the bag, and let it very quietly down to me."

To have this to do relieved the tension of the moment. Julia's fingers were clumsy with excitement, but she managed to open the bag, put in the unbroken pig, and then let it down as Roger had directed. She heard the rattle of his descent amongst the ivy, but whatever noise he made as he touched the ground was covered by the loud steps and voices now ascending the stairs. She could see him as she leaned out of the window, she kissed her hand to him, and then in a moment he was gone, for he took his way close to the garden hedge, and then out of the garden by the back gate. As a rough knock sounded on the panel of the door she drew back the sheet and stood quite still staring dazedly across the pastures that lay between the back of the house and the high-road leading to the moor. Blows rained on the door now, threats addressed to Roger reached her through the keyhole. She was never tempted to make a sound in answer to them. She turned now from the window to watch the old elm door, and she blessed her ancestors for making it stout and lasting. Every moment took the man who had just left her further towards safety, further from her; and she thought in her heart that, whether he was Bert or Roger, he was the man she loved.

XV

ROGER had to traverse two fields and find a gap in the hedge before he struck the road. Luckily during the week of his convalescence he had got by heart every feature of the few acres surrounding the farm. The main road from Rockmouth ran inland most of the way, but divided near the house, one fork

leading past the front gate and through the village, the other ascending Trevalla Hill. About a mile from the village the two roads met again high up on the moor.

Roger cut straight across the pasture, past mild astonished cattle and through long grass soaked with dew. The road when he reached it was deserted, but Roger knew that half a mile further on he would reach a great upland plain, where the way would stretch before him like a white ribbon, while for some distance he would be visible on it, or even amongst the stunted gorse and heather carpeting the moor on either side. However, there was nothing for him to do but to walk straight on until he heard the sound of wheels, and then to take such cover as he could find. He only knew the neighbourhood from Julia's talk about it, and when he got to the foot of the hill he was dismayed to find that the vegetation in which he might have to hide hardly reached above his ankles. He walked as quickly as he could to the edge of a great rolling moor flaming in gold and purple, scented like honey, but sheltering no creatures bigger than the rabbits who had come out to feed and scampered from him in swarms. He thought of the bread and cheese in his pocket, and began to want it badly, but he still walked at too great a pace to eat as he went along. He thought it likely that Dr. Spott would follow him along this road. Roger naturally knew nothing of English lunacy laws, or in what measure police and medical men worked together for their observance. He wondered how far their power reached, and when he might consider himself in safety. He thought that he had better avoid the city of Bilchester, where the police by to-morrow morning might have received a full description of him, and he made up his mind that if he needed a name at all on his travels he would borrow one.

He was still some way from the top of the hill when there came through the quiet air the sound of a motor-horn, unaccompanied as yet by any sound of its machinery. He stepped a little aside, expecting every moment to see a car appear over the crest of the hill

and swoop towards him on its way to Rockmouth. Presently he heard the sound again. But no car appeared, and when the horn wailed several times in succession he surmised a breakdown. For a moment he hesitated. He could not afford either to be detained or to retrace his steps in search of help—if help was wanted. But his alternative was to strike westwards across the moor in search of the village road. He did not want to waste time over that, and on the east lay sheer cliffs and then the sea. So he went on listening with some amazement to the sounds floating at short intervals towards him. The blasts were so capricious, so hurried, and apparently so panic-stricken, that Roger made up his mind that a woman must be responsible for them. Either a woman in difficulties or a man with neither nerve nor sense, and that he was sure to be hindered. He looked back as he reached the crest of the hill and saw an empty stretch of road vanishing in the far distance into darkness. So far so good. A few yards further he came to the level ground, and still a quarter of a mile away he saw the large dim shape of a motor-car standing still. He increased his pace, and was not much surprised to see a figure detach itself from the car and come hurrying towards him. He soon made out that it was a woman, and directly she was within earshot she spoke.

"Have you seen a chauffeur?" she said.

"I have seen no one," said Roger, observing that the lady was young and small and pretty.

She took stock of him, too.

"I can't think what we're to do," she said. "I never heard of any one losing a chauffeur before, did you?"

"How did it happen?" said Roger, as she turned back with him.

"It happened more than an hour ago. He stopped the car and said he'd dropped something, and wanted to fetch it . . . and he's been fetching it ever since. There isn't a public-house within sight or else——"

"Are you quite alone?" said Roger.

"No. I'm with my husband. But he's an invalid,

and I'm most anxious not to distress or alarm him. I don't know what to do. We can't move without the chauffeur . . . and we have our luggage with us . . . we can't leave it on the top of the moor. Besides, my husband is not fit to walk any distance."

Roger's eyes, used to scan great distances, were ranging now over the moor that stretched for miles on either side of the road. While he searched, and while he talked he still listened for the sound of wheels coming up the hill, but could hear nothing but a slight regular murmur that seemed to be close at hand, and which puzzled him. The noise of their steps covered it, and so did their voices. It reached him first when they stood still for a moment, and he looked beyond the road, trying to localize it.

"What is that?" he said.

"I don't hear anything," said the lady.

"I do," said Roger, and he listened again, and then walked a little way across the moor.

"There is nothing here but gorse, and it is very prickly," said the lady. "Won't you come and speak to my husband?"

"Look," said Roger, pointing ahead.

"I can't see anything," said the lady; but Roger went on.

"Here he is," he called over his shoulder; and the lady came up to him, stepping gingerly and slowly across the prickles. Together they listened to the man's heavy snores.

"Is it apoplexy?" said she.

Roger knelt down and bent over the sleeper.

"Whisky," he said.

The lady sighed.

"My husband is a philanthropist," she explained.

"He will employ them."

Roger rose to his feet.

"He won't wake for hours," she continued gloomily,

"and then——"

"Have you seen him like this before?" said Roger, rather astonished.

"Not this man—but others. My husband doesn't take much interest in people unless they drink, or steal, or something, and then he likes them about him. We often used to have burglars in the house—I mean reformed ones, of course. I liked them better than the inebriates, because I'm nervous about fire. What are we to do, I wonder?"

"Perhaps we had better consult your husband," said Roger.

The lady's piquant face was turned whimsically upwards, as if she sought help of the clouds.

"I adore my husband," she said.

Roger could not help smiling.

"If you consult me," he said, "you'll leave this—here and engage me as your chauffeur."

"You!"

"I haven't all the qualifications," Roger admitted; "I neither drink nor steal."

"But you are a gentleman."

"I can manage a motor as well as if I was not. What is your car?"

"A Panhard. Fifteen horse-power."

"That's good enough," said Roger.

The lady looked at the unconscious body amongst the gorse.

"My husband will never consent to leave him here," she said.

"He is not in a condition to travel with you," said Roger. "He'll come to no harm here. I suppose he has some money on him."

"We gave him a five-pound note this morning. He told us he could not get it changed in Rock-mouth."

Roger put his hand inside one of the man's waistcoat pockets, and pulled out some loose gold and silver.

"He's all right," he said, putting it back again.

"I'll risk it," said the lady. "I'll leave him behind. But I won't say a word to my husband till to-morrow. Why are you taking his cap?"

"I'm going to wear it," said Roger, "and his leather coat, too. I suppose they both belong to you? I'll leave him my straw hat."

It took Roger two or three minutes to get the garments he wanted from the man's heavy, helpless body, and when he had done this he left the chauffeur lying on a patch of short moorland grass with his head pointing to the road. His white straw hat must now be visible to any one passing by.

"Some one going to the village may see him and pick him up," said Roger, who now wore the peaked cap and leather coat proper to his new position. As he spoke he moved briskly across the moor, for his alert ears had caught a faint far-away sound that he took to be distant wheels. By the time the lady and he reached the road again he heard them clearly.

"My husband is Colonel Loraine," said the lady. "What is your name?"

"Robert Brown," said Roger, after a moment's hesitation, which she noticed.

"Are you an American?"

"I am an Australian."

"Have you been long in England?"

"I arrived on Whit-Monday."

"I suppose you are on a walking tour?"

"I was when I met you," said Roger.

He heard the wheels very plainly now, and wished he had it in his power to hurry the little lady on. The moments dragged while they walked up to the car and discussed the route they were about to take. When they were close by Roger perceived a small muffled figure patiently waiting in the sheltered corner of the tonneau.

"That's my husband," whispered Mrs. Loraine. "Just get up and start as if nothing had happened. When I left him he was nearly asleep. Perhaps he'll take you for Dobbs."

This was just what Roger desired, but as he was more than a foot taller than Dobbs, he thought Colonel Loraine must be a curiously unobservant man if his

wife's ruse succeeded. He was sorry to find out at once that it did not.

"My dear Irene," said the figure in the car to his wife, "who is this strange young man?"

"He has come instead of Dobbs," said Mrs. Loraine.

"But what has happened to Dobbs?"

"He is ill."

"Poor fellow. I knew nothing else could account for his absence. And, though he was ill, he thought of us and sent some one in his place. Just what I expect of Dobbs. Do you know this young man's name, my dear?"

"Brown. Robert Brown."

"I must inquire where he left Dobbs . . . the poor fellow may be——"

"Oh, never mind Dobbs," Roger heard the lady say impatiently; "I'm far more anxious about you. If we stay up here much longer I'll have you downright ill to-morrow."

"But, my dear, I must inquire whether this young man can drive? Brown, can you really drive?"

"I drove the winning car for the Colonial Cup in last year's race," said Roger, who by this time had made a hurried survey of the car and found, to his immense relief, that she appeared to be in running order.

He was now waiting, starting-handle in hand, and listening in an agony of impatience to the steady advance of wheels behind.

"But have you driven a Panhard before?" asked Colonel Loraine.

"The first car I ever drove was a Panhard," said Roger.

Colonel Loraine turned to his wife and spoke in an undertone.

"I don't like the idea of a racing chauffeur," he said; "the last thing I desire is to race, especially in this mountainous country. Brown——"

Roger, who had now started his engine and settled himself in his seat, tried to dissemble his impatience.

"Please to remember that you are not running a race," said Colonel Loraine.

"I shall be directly if he doesn't let me go," thought Roger; but he made some soothing reply and had his hand on the lever at his side when again the colonel's voice arrested him.

"Wait—wait—don't start yet!" he heard to his dismay. "There is something behind us. I just want to see what it is."

"Why?" asked his wife.

"It might be a message from Dobbs," said the colonel, "the poor fellow may be worse and require our help. Was he comfortable when you left him, Brown?"

"Quite comfortable," said Roger, sitting as still as the cavalry did at Delhi, and requiring nearly as much nerve as they did. Every moment the pursuing wheels came nearer, and his chance of escape looked less.

Meanwhile the colonel, from the back of the car, was watching the curious proceedings of the trap which had just come to a standstill.

"Bless me," he cried, "how odd! How very odd!"

His wife, attracted by his exclamation, turned with a little sigh, half-tender, half-impatient, to look also.

"One man has got down from the trap," said Colonel Loraine; "he seems to be looking for something. I wonder what it can be. I should like to know. Please to back a little, Brown."

"Won't it frighten the horse?" said Roger.

"My car won't frighten a lamb if it's properly managed," said the colonel. "I've seen Dobbs pass within an inch of a two-year-old child, and the child only laughed. Please to back at once, Brown."

So Roger pulled his peaked cap well over his eyes, and backed a few yards. As he stopped the trap drove alongside.

"Be there one o' yeou as can help us?" said a voice, and it was not the voice of Dr. Spott.

"Certainly," said the amiable colonel at once. "What is it you want?"

"We'm up here looking for a man, and we've found him. But I've a horse here as I can't leave, and my son wants some one to help lift the man into the trap."

"Brown," said the colonel, "go and help. No . . . stop a minute. What has the man done? I like to know a little about a case before I assist it."

"I don't know as he've done anything," said the new-comer in a surly, stupid tone. "Didn't get the chance. But he's dead drunk."

"Dear me, dear me," sighed the colonel, and stood up in the car to discuss the symptoms with the farmer in the trap.

Meanwhile the little lady leaned forward and whispered in Roger's ear.

"Is it you they want?" she asked.

He hesitated a little and made up his mind to trust her.

"Help me."

"You've done nothing wrong?"

"Nothing. I've been wronged."

"Now, my dear," said the colonel, "Brown is wanted a moment, and the sooner he goes the sooner we shall get off."

Roger did not feel at all sure of that, but he was forced to comply. The man in the trap seemed to see that he did it with a bad grace.

"'Twon't take 'e a minute," he said.

"We're late, and I want my supper," said Roger.

"What sort o' chap is this? Why are you after him?"

"He's a poor chap from Lunnon as has gone crazy and nearly murdered Farmer Martin and his family to-night. Fetched a gun out, he did, but Dr. Spott took it away."

"How does he get up here on the moor?"

"I don't rightly know. The doctor he come for my son and me, and we helped 'em bash in one o' Farmer Martin's doors, and then we only found Julia Martin there, and she said he had escaped Rockmouth way. So the doctors took one road, and we come the other, and we've found him. Julia be a liar, I'm thinking."

- XVI

ROGER looked at the young farmer waiting beside the inanimate body of the chauffeur. He was a stranger.

"Dr. Spott says he's crazy," the son observed, when the father brought the trap to a standstill. "I'll lay he've just been enjoying hisself."

"Dr. Spott should know when a chap be drunk," said the father.

"'Tis so," said the son.

"Us'll tie his hands first," he continued, producing a piece of cord. "We don't want a fight in the trap."

"Where are you taking him to?" asked Roger.

"Down to Martins' . . . and if we don't find Dr. Spott there, to the 'sylum.'"

That satisfied Roger's conscience. At the Martins' the man would be set free at once, and find himself in a village where he could get a roof to his head if he was sober enough to ask for it.

Probably the Martins would guide him to one. Roger helped to tie the man's hands and to carry him to the dog-cart, while the old farmer watched them with the interest of a connoisseur.

"You've roused him a bit," he said. "Be wary getting him in. I'd sooner he went off again."

Roger, hearing this, handled the man as if he was made of eggs. But it is not easy to lift a heavy body into the back part of a high dog-cart harnessed to a skittish horse. When, with some bumping it, they had managed to, a new difficulty arose.

"This cord bain't safe," said the young farmer. "If it gives, he'll roll out and hurt hisself."

He produced a second length of cord, and Roger, fuming with impatience, had to help him secure the drunken man to the seat. His business was to hold him firm, and for a minute the chauffeur's helpless head rolled heavily on his breast. Then to Roger's horror, as he tried to prop him up, the man opened his eyes and even tried to speak.

"Who are you?" he begun. But his lips were glued by sleep, his eyes shut again, his head drooped and once more he snored. Roger, however, had taken fright.

"I'm off," he cried, "I can hear my governor tootling for me. You're fixed up now, aren't you?"

He did not wait for an answer. The sound of the motor-horn really floated towards him, and directly it stopped he heard the sharp patter of a trotting horse on the cross-road joining the two roads from Trevalla. The motor had, no doubt, heard this too, and probably it was the little lady who had sent him a warning note. Roger ran as fast as he could. The arrival of a second trap alarmed him, though he chid himself for being alarmed. He reckoned that it would pass him just before he reached the motor-car, and he made up his mind to walk straight on, looking neither to right nor left as it went by. He watched it turn from the cross-roads into the main one, and when he saw it stop close to the motor he gave himself up for lost. He was near enough to hear Dr. Spott's coarse voice raised in inquiry, and Mrs. Loraine's refined one in answer. The doctors must have received some information near the farm that caused them to turn back from Rockmouth and drive up here by the village road. His impulse again was to make a bolt across the moor, and again he restrained it, hoping desperately for luck. Before he reached the motor the dog-cart moved to meet him. He walked resolutely forward, his heart in his mouth. It passed him, and he looked neither to left nor to right. But he knew now that his escape depended literally on moments. In less than a minute he could board the car and start, but in less than a minute the doctors would be alongside the other dog-cart and discover the tipsy chauffeur. Roger took to his heels as he remembered the lolling thickset figure of the man, and the unseemly picture the evening light made of him. A glance would reveal the deception. Once more he started the engine, jumped on to the car without speaking, and took the wheel in his hands.

"Well," said the voice of Colonel Loraine, "did you help them lift the fellow in?"

"Yes," said Roger, obliged to turn and answer.

"Two more people came in search of him," said the little lady; and her composure told Roger the thing he was anxious to know. The doctors could not have described him as a violent lunatic.

"They actually drew up close to the car and insisted that my husband was the man they wanted," she continued. "You see, he is so muffled up."

"One of them was not over sober himself," said Colonel Loraine. "A most unpleasant fellow, I thought. I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and then his language became disgraceful. If you had been here I should have requested you to start."

Roger was on tenter-hooks. He was trying now to make the car move, but it did not respond at once. The clutch jumped and slipped in a horrible way, and he thought she was going to jib.

"I believe they are all drunk and quarrelling," said the little lady, who was listening to the loud shouts and objurgations below. "Do be quick and get away from them, Brown."

"I'll be quick if the car will," said Roger.

As he spoke, all the rattle and vibration suddenly ceased, and the car began to glide away with a soothing hum.

"They're coming up the hill," cried Mrs. Loraine. "Both the dog-carts are coming up the hill. They'll be on us in a moment."

She held her breath in fear of saying some word that would rouse her husband's suspicions. Roger did not speak or turn to look at his pursuers. He rammed in his second speed, and as he crested the hill, the third and then the fourth speed went in with a gentle click. The powerful car bounded away like a live thing, and Roger saw before him an interminable sweep of white road stretching on a downhill grade to the edge of beyond. He was now swooping towards that far horizon safe from the fleetest horse ever shod.

"I believe they are shouting to us to stop," said Colonel Loraine. "Perhaps we ought . . ."

"Not on any account," said his wife. "It's that abusive person again. I object to his language. It's catch who catch can now."

For a few yards Dr. Spott did his best, shouting and cursing his best, too, as he followed the flying car. But in half a minute the chase was over. The car whizzed down the long incline as swiftly and neatly as if it had been driven on rails, the moor flew past on either side; the little lady felt ready to dance with delight and exhilaration.

"Now there's a man at the wheel," she whispered to her husband; but Colonel Loraine looked back at the hill they had descended and shuddered. His nerves were not what they had been.

"I prefer Dobbs," he said. "I never had any desire to ride the lightning."

"I wonder what he has done," thought Mrs. Loraine, her mind still occupied with Roger. "I wonder if there is a woman in it. . . . But he told me he had only arrived in England a fortnight ago. Of course a fortnight is long enough for anything, but he looks so ill . . . and so poor . . ."

"The trouble is that I don't know where I am," said Roger, slackening his pace. "Where do you reckon to sleep to-night?"

"We had thought of Bilchester," said Mrs. Loraine, doubtfully.

"There is a sign-post," said Roger, seeing it before any one else did.

He stopped the car at the cross-roads and jumped off. The little lady followed him.

"Druidstown," said Roger. "Shall we get on there?"

"Bilchester is nearer," said the little lady.

"Is it on the Druidstown road?" asked Roger, who was anxious to avoid a halt at Bilchester. He thought it very likely that Dr. Spott would communicate with the police there. As he craned upwards, try-

ing to find further information on the sign-post, Mrs. Loraine looked at him meditatively.

"I wish we could go straight home," she said; "I hate strange doctors."

"Are you in need of a doctor?"

"Colonel Loraine will be after this journey. Exposure is bad for him, and fatigue and agitation."

"Where is your home?"

"At Wimbledon—about six miles from London."

"We must be about two hundred miles from London," said Roger. "That would take us about seven hours. Could Colonel Loraine stand that?"

"He says so—and I would rather risk the journey than a strange inn and an unknown doctor. But how about you?"

"I can do it."

"You want to get to London?"

"I must get there."

"Have you work? Or friends in London?"

Roger did not hesitate.

"Just at first," he said, "will you engage me as your chauffeur?"

"Without references?"

"I can get you references—in time—possibly in England—certainly from Australia."

The little lady laughed, and without further discussion Roger knew that if she had her way the bargain was concluded.

"Brown is going to take us home," she said to her husband as they set off again. "We shall soon be at Bilchester, and we can wire home and to Dr. Black from there. Of course we must stop at Bilchester and get something to eat."

"Dobbs seems to have sent us a very capable man," said Colonel Loraine. "I wish he could stay on for the present."

"He wants to," said Mrs. Loraine; "and I think he will suit us. He is evidently a gentleman; he has no references, and I believe he has given us a false name. There is certainly some mystery about him."

I hope he doesn't drink. After a long experience, I prefer a thief. He finds my watch and my purse, and goes without bother."

"My dear," said Colonel Loraine, "that only happened once, and I bought you a new watch directly. I can't think why you should suspect this young man of anything. He comes to us from Dobbs, and he has an open countenance."

"I was only trying to rouse your interest on his behalf," said the little lady. "I think him charming, and I want him to be our chauffeur."

Roger reached Bilchester before the chief hotel was shut, and drew up there. Then he went to Colonel Loraine's assistance, for he saw that the poor gentleman had some difficulty in alighting. He helped him mount the steps of the hotel and take off his wraps in the hall, and he discovered that his new employer was a small, fragile-looking man with the eyes of a dreamer, the mouth of an ascetic, and the smile of a child. He thanked his chauffeur for helping him, told him to make a good supper, ordered the best the house had to offer for his wife, and said he would take one soft boiled egg and a glass of hot water himself.

Roger's first thought was for the car on which so much depended. He took her round to the yard at the back of the hotel, looked her over thoroughly, filled the water tank, and secured a plentiful supply of petrol. After that he had his supper, and then he asked whether there was a barber in Bilchester who had not gone to bed yet, because it was now going on for eleven. He longed for a shave as a clean man involuntarily dirty longs for a wash; and while he attended to the car he had contrived to break the faithful Julia's pig, and take from it a handful of coppers. One of the hotel servants said he had a cousin who was a barber, and he volunteered to go in search of him with Roger. They found him in a small public-house, got him away, and persuaded him, under protest, to accept a customer at that unusual hour. The change his ministrations made was amazing,

and as Roger issued from the little shop he wondered whether Colonel and Mrs. Loraine would know him again.

When he got back to the hotel the head-waiter met him with a summons from his employers. Roger went straight into the dining-room, and as he took off his cap the light fell on his fine clean-shaven features. Both the little lady and her husband stared, remembered that it was not polite to stare, and in spite of themselves stared again.

"My husband is anxious on your account," Mrs. Loraine began. "He thinks it is too much for you to take us home to-night, and he proposes that we should stay here."

Roger's face fell with disappointment.

"I am quite well enough to take you home if you wish it," he said, remembering that it would be incorrect to urge his own wishes.

"Are you in a hurry to get to London?" asked Mrs. Loraine.

"Every hour I lose matters," said Roger.

"But you want to stay on with us when you get there."

"Yes, I want to stay on with you."

"I am anxious about Dobbs too," said Colonel Loraine. "Here we are not far from Dobbs. If he needed us——"

"He was on the road to recovery when I left him," said Roger; and his eyes met those of the little lady.

"Dobbs can communicate with us when he is able," she said to her husband. "He knows our address."

She saw a slight tremor pass over Roger's face, and leave it tranquil. He had reckoned with the drunken chauffeur, and the information he could give when he woke. With the help of the two farmers Dr. Spott might make out that Roger had escaped in the motor, and he might either warn the Loraines that they were harbouring a dangerous lunatic, or he might decide to take no further trouble about him. In any case, it was to be suspected that Dobbs would turn up again, and have tales to tell. Roger could

not put any shape to his future yet. He must needs live from hour to hour, and take events as they came. But he felt anxious now to get to London.

"How long will it take us to get home from here?" asked Mrs. Loraine.

"Five or six hours," said Roger.

"That won't do. No one would be up. Could you take seven or seven and a half hours?"

"Certainly. We can go as slow as you like."

"I should love to travel by night," coaxed the little lady, turning to her husband. "We have never done it."

So under protest from Colonel Loraine they started, and for some hours Roger was too much absorbed to feel fatigue. But in time the buzz of the car, the dim landscape, and the cool silence of an empty world affected him. While the stars twinkled in a dark sky he felt alert and awake. It was the break of a grey dawn that found him drowsy. Behind him the husband and wife both slept. The steering wheel slackened in his hands once or twice, his worn body cried out for sleep too, and it was with an immense effort that he just roused himself for a final spurt. The morning fell with cold, depressing mists, the air was heavy, there were no rosy lights in the sky yet. He felt insufficiently clad.

"Where are we?" said Mrs. Loraine, waking with a shiver. "Oh, this is Kingston. Then we are nearly home."

At this juncture Mrs. Loraine thought her new chauffeur behaved oddly. He who had been so pleasant and courteous took no notice of what she said. He forged ahead, uphill and downhill, regardless of policemen, regardless a little of the stirring populations, deaf more than once to her cautions. He turned a square back to her when she addressed him, and he spoke as if the words hung on his tongue when he had to ask her the way. Their stable clock struck seven as he took the car round the semicircle of their drive. She felt cold, dispirited, and mystified when she got down and rang the bell.

"I think Colonel Loraine will be glad of your help," she said to Roger, wondering why he did not get down, too.

He made no movement, said no word in reply, and that alarmed her. She ran forward from the door to look at him, and when she saw his haggard face she ran to the back of the car to get a flask of brandy, and tried to pour some down his throat.

The astonished maid who came to the door a moment later beheld her master fast asleep in one corner of the car, while her mistress was anxiously bending over the lifeless form of a young man who wore Dobbs's cap, but was not Dobbs.

XVII

MR. GAMMAGE had just hatched a clever idea, and he leaned back in his chair to look at it. From his window he could see Pamela gathering roses for to-night's dinner party. He had locked himself into his bedroom so that he might practise the imitation of his cousin's handwriting undisturbed. It was impossible to present a letter of credit until he could counterfeit Roger's signatures, and he could not vanish without plenty of money. So far his plan had been to slip away from Greymarsh as soon as he could, and to travel for a year or two, only returning when time and use had made his position secure. He believed that two years hence he would feel able to meet Mrs. Bradwardine, or even any of Roger's Australian friends, with equanimity. In two years a man's memory . . .

The pen dropped from Bert's hands. The brilliance of the idea overcame him, and he wished he had thought of it sooner. If he acted on it he need not vanish from these pleasant places. The colonel had been almost affable this morning as he took him round, and Mrs. Blois was affable in her addle-headed way, and Pamela, though not exactly affable, was ripping; more ripping than either Florrie or Julia. Mr. Gammage bounded to his feet, locked away his papers, and went into the

garden, which, at this hour in the afternoon, was half in shade. Pamela wore a white gown and a floppy hat, and she carried a great flat basket and a pair of scissors. As Mr. Gammage approached the rose bushes he thought of the office in Wood Street, and congratulated himself. He had been here five days now, and every hour that passed left him better pleased with his own cleverness, and more hopeful of permanent success. The magnitude of the prize he had snatched at began to dazzle him, and his manner began to show elation. That extraordinary moment in a dream when you take great steps easily and tread on air has a likeness to Mr. Gammage's mood as he crossed the Greymarsh lawn.

"Will you allow me to assist you?" he said to Pamela.

"I've just finished, thanks," she said, and came away from the border.

Even Mr. Gammage's present sanguine humour could not find her tone encouraging. She did not look at him as she spoke.

"May I have a rose?" he said persuasively.

"As many as you like," she said, and handed him the scissors.

Mr. Gammage took them because he did not know what else to do, and they dangled from his hands.

"I wanted one that you had cut," he made bold to say, after an awkward pause.

"I can't spare them," said Pamela. "We are rather short of the colour we want for the dinner table."

"I suppose you're very busy," said Mr. Gammage, remembering the bustle there always was at Barnes when the Martins expected company. To tell the truth, he missed it. This air of leisure on the very day of a dinner-party seemed to him rather cold-blooded.

"Is there anything you would like to do?" said Pamela, politely.

"Is there anything I can do?" said Mr. Gammage. "If you want the wine decanted or some little job of that sort . . . I won't offer to arrange the flowers, because my taste isn't equal to yours."

Pamela had read stories of American country life, in which the ladies of the household baked their own cakes and pies, and set their own table when they entertained their friends. She thought it sounded amusing, and she supposed the same conditions of things obtained in Australia. But when she read American stories, she did not picture the young men in any way like Mr. Gammage. "The Virginian" was one of her beloved heroes, and she had envied Molly her wedding-journey. Romance and reality seemed widely divided as she glanced at the figure by her side.

"I thought perhaps you wanted a game," she said. "Do you play croquet?"

"I've never tried," said Mr. Gammage, who had been round the links and on the tennis lawn with Pamela, and had made an exhibition of himself in both places.

"Very well," she said resignedly, "we'll set up the hoops after tea."

Mr. Gammage would have preferred a whisky and soda at this hour of the afternoon, but he did not like to say so. Colonel and Mrs. Blois both came into the garden now, and tea was served under the cedar tree. Mr. Gammage ate cucumber sandwiches, and waited for his opening. During the last few days he had considered his position as carefully as he could, and he had quite made up his mind to carry on his impersonation of Roger Blois. He had very strong reasons in the shape of Florrie and Julia for wishing to cut himself adrift from his past life; and if he was guilty of a fraud it was, at any rate, one that harmed nobody. For he had found no papers amongst his kinsman's possessions that provided for the disposal of his property after death. Mr. Gammage hoped he was not committing a legal felony, and met the fear of it by resolving to tread cautiously and never get found out. The step he was now about to take was a step in the right direction. He moved his chair into the deeper shade. No one took any notice. He then took off his hat, and placed his handkerchief inside it so that it dangled down the back of his neck.

Pamela fed her Bedlington puppy with bread and butter, and while she did so glanced at Mr. Gammage's manœuvres with the neutral glance of a well-bred person who watches queer manners, but would rather die than reveal his opinion of them. It was Mrs. Blois who at last gave her guest the opening he required.

"I suppose you are used to winter weather in June," she said.

"I feel this heat," said Mr. Gammage, panting rather artificially. "Phew!"

"You are in no danger of sunstroke under this cedar," said Colonel Blois.

"You can't be too careful when you've had it once," said Mr. Gammage, "so all the doctors over there told me."

"Have you had it once?" asked Pamela.

"Badly. In fact, I've never quite recovered."

"Pamela," said Mrs. Blois, "one leg of your chair is in the sun. Do move it."

"I am not afraid of sunstroke," said Pamela.

"Then you don't know what a nasty thing it is," said Mr. Gammage. "How would you like to wake up to-morrow morning and forget everything that had happened to-day?"

"Should I miss much?" said a mischievous light in Pamela's eyes, but she offered her puppy a sandwich, and did not speak.

"When did you have sunstroke?" said Colonel Blois.

"About six months before I sailed," said Mr. Gammage. He had decided that he would have recovered before appearing on board ship.

"You didn't mention it in your letters."

"Didn't I? I suppose I thought you wouldn't consider it an interesting subject."

"I am always interested in illness," said Mrs. Blois.

"Is there anything we can do for you? What are your symptoms?"

"It's like this," said Mr. Gammage, "I forget about things and people—like I did about that kangaroo. Sometimes it's quite awkward."

"It must be," said Colonel Blois. He spoke drily.

"Sometimes," continued Mr. Gammage, foreseeing a future use for such further embroidery, "sometimes I have such a violent sick 'eadache that I'm obliged to retire to bed."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Blois, mentally reviewing various remedies for headache, and considering her guest's complexion thoughtfully. Colonel Blois put his empty cup down and walked away.

"I think I'll take Ruffles for a run on the marsh," said Pamela, getting up.

"How about that game of croquet?" said Mr. Gammage.

"The sun is still on the croquet-lawn."

"I'll chance that—for once."

But Mrs. Blois interfered. She was sure it would not be safe; she advised shade and repose, and she was going indoors at once to tell the colonel that he really must order that ice-making machine immediately.

"We have to send miles for ice," she said. "You might want some at a moment's notice any day."

"What for?" asked Mr. Gammage.

"To put on your aching head," explained Pamela, as Mrs. Blois hurried off. "Mother has been wanting that machine for months. If dad still shilly shallies about ordering it, you must have a little sunstroke to oblige her."

Mr. Gammage stared after the girl's light figure as she walked away, the great basket of roses on her arm. In spite of her lightness of manner, he found her unapproachable; but he did not despair yet. He smoked a leisurely cigar in the garden, then he dozed for an hour over one of his Australian books, and then he dressed carefully for dinner. He put his gloves in his pocket this evening, and determined not to wear them unless he saw that Colonel Blois wore his. Unfortunately Roger's clothes did not fit him like wax, and the big mirror in his room showed imperfections with cruel plainness. He hoped the lamp

and candlelight downstairs would be kinder; and he made up his mind that between this and the garden party on the 28th he must run up to London and have his wardrobe overhauled by a good tailor. Perhaps the one employed by Colonel Blois would undertake alterations for the friend of an old customer. Mr. Gammage reflected that a sunstroke, a long sea voyage, and a new climate might combine to make a man thinner in some places and broader in others. The colonel, who dressed with military perfection, must have observed that his guest's sleeves were all a little too short, but that might be put down to the ways of the Australian tailor.

When he got downstairs the dining-room door stood ajar, and he peeped through it at the lengthened table set with flowers, glass and silver. He felt elated as he thought of his place there to-night, and of his possible place there in the future. From this standpoint life looked rosy, and he thought with a shudder of the old life he had so daringly cast from him. In the drawing-room he found Colonel and Mrs. Blois. Pamela had not appeared yet. Mrs. Blois he observed wore gloves, but her husband did not. So Mr. Gammage kept his in his pocket.

"Will you take my daughter in to dinner?" his host said to him while they were still by themselves.

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Mr. Gammage, looking radiant at the prospect. He had dreaded a strange young woman, who would even be less "genial" than Pamela.

"Mrs. Lutterworth, the curate's wife, will be on your other side," said Mrs. Blois. "She is a great traveller, and has been in Australia. Perhaps you will find you have mutual friends there. You will find her very easy to get on with, too. I believe she would talk to a tramp rather than not hear the sound of her own voice. No one could call her sticky."

"Why is Pamela not down?" asked the colonel, as if his wife ought to know. "I hear people arriving." So Every one had arrived before Pamela made her

appearance. Her father sent her a reproving glance, which she answered with a twinkle of her eyelids that was professedly contrite and really audacious. As Mr. Gammage watched her move about the room he compared her to a feather, she walked with such conspicuous grace and lightness. He wished he could get near her. He had been introduced to people, but he did not catch all their names or understand their relationships yet. The lady he expected to be Mrs. Bradwardine really was Mrs. Bradwardine, and when she recognized him, she did it so frostily that he felt crushed. As present he was sitting on a sofa with Mrs. Lutterworth, and doing his best to agree with her about the Bushmen. Luckily he had discovered their existence as he nodded over his book this afternoon. His answers were rather distracted because he was watching Pamela and wondering when he ought to get up and stand near her with his arm ready. Then the butler announced dinner, Colonel Blois made a move with Lady Studland, other people followed him, and Pamela hastily turned to Mr. Gammage.

"I want to introduce you to Miss Bradwardine," she said. "You are to take her in, and sit near Mrs. Lutterworth."

Mr. Gammage would have protested if he could, but it was impossible. As he rose, he found himself face to face with Miss Bradwardine, a quiet, dark-haired girl, who had no complexion and distinguished manners. Mr. Gammage would have preferred no manners and a complexion, so he took his place in the procession with a dejected mind. Pamela had disappeared without giving him time to open his mouth. The soup was finished, and the fish had come, before Colonel Blois, scanning either side of the long table, saw his daughter where she had no business to be, opposite the Australian instead of beside him, screened from him by flowers, and talking with evident contentment to Jack Bradwardine and Sir Charles Burnham.

XVIII

IT was an excellent dinner, but Mr. Gammage did not enjoy it much. Mrs. Lutterworth talked of Australia with the intimate knowledge of a new continent that a really receptive mind gathers in a week at a port of call; and Kitty Bradwardine asked him questions about the *Electric*, and her cousin, Captain Lascelles. Both ladies began by being very cordial. They were rather surprised by his accent, and by the angle of his elbows, but they did not wish to attach much weight to these little peculiarities. As dinner went on, however, Kitty thought with increasing wonder of her mother's letter referring to this gentleman. Had her father indited it, she could have better understood. The amiable rector did not mind how a man ate cherries, provided he possessed those weighty qualities of mind and character that are alone worthy to command respect. Mrs. Bradwardine said, "Quite so, my dear, but we won't ask him to dinner," when her husband talked like this, and she always had her way. It was inconceivable that she should ever have been charmed by the young man now at Kitty's side. It was inconceivable that he should have approached her, except with a pen behind his ear and a counter between them. To be sure, he had money, and in these days money can climb to the top of the social tree, whatever shape it wears. But Mrs. Bradwardine did not live on the top of the social tree, and did not wish to. She understood that a good many queer birds gathered there.

"So you don't know Melbourne," said Mrs. Lutterworth with regret.

"Never been there in my life," said Mr. Gammage, who had just put a shell of some unknown mixture on his plate and was watching to see what other people did with it.

"How do you like England so far?" asked Kitty Bradwardine.

"Rather small," said Mr. Gammage.

"Were you in a hot part of Australia?" asked Mrs. Lutterworth.

"Pretty well," said Mr. Gammage; "there was a good deal of sunstroke about. I had it myself."

"Where exactly were you?"

Mr. Gammage could answer that question luckily, and did so, but he began to feel out of humour.

"I'm longing to see Pamela's kangaroo," said Kitty.

Both ladies had turned towards him, and were paying him the most polite attention. He wished they wouldn't. Besides, he was hungry, and they apparently were not, for they let dish after dish go by them. He thought it would have been more comfortable if they had pretended to eat and left him a little peace for his dinner. A man can't enjoy his food when two women fix their eyes on him and jabber.

"What kangaroo?" he said rather sulkily. He had just taken some peas and was shovelling them on to his fork with a piece of bread, but even so he found them troublesome.

"The baby kangaroo," said Kitty. "The one the sailor had on board, you know. Didn't you bring it?"

"It died," said Mr. Gammage, wishing for the moment that every one on the *Electric* had shared its fate.

"Died!—but——"

"Kangaroos often die," said Mr. Gammage. "They're delicate."

"How odd!" said Kitty.

"What's odd?"

"The suddenness of it," said Kitty. "Had it a weak heart?"

"I dessay," rejoined Mr. Gammage; and then he rather abruptly changed the subject.

"I hope we haven't made an error coming in together," he said. "The colonel told me to sit next to Miss Pamela."

"Did he?" said Kitty, rather surprised.

"Do you suppose he'll be annoyed?"

"I don't know—not with you, of course."

"Perhaps I'd better say it was my mistake," sug-

gested Mr. Gammage; and then to his neighbour's surprise he stretched out his hand, and shifted a bowl of roses that hid Pamela from his view.

"I can see her very well now," he said simply. "Who are the two gentlemen near her?"

"The young one is my brother Jack, and the other is Sir Charles Burnham."

"I expect that's why she did it," said Mr. Gammage, with cryptic gloom.

He raised a glass of champagne to his lips, and nearly emptied it. He was a sober man, but he was drinking rather more than he knew to-night, because the servants refilled glasses before they were empty, and without asking. As dinner went on he began to feel happier and more talkative, his neighbours no longer alarmed him, and once, when there was a sudden lull, the whole table heard him assure Miss Bradwardine that she would not live in the country a day if she knew as much as he did about the delights of the town. This sentiment might have been forgiven even in that company of country squires and clergymen; but it was beyond some of them to condone the accent. The young man, however, was heir to the Blois property, and the friends of Colonel Blois had assembled to make his acquaintance and do him honour. Every one present treated him with a courtesy that successfully hid an irrepressible inward shudder.

"When you have all gone to-night, dad will scalp me," said Pamela to Sir Charles Burnham. They were very old friends, and he knew the family temper.

"What have you been up to now?" he asked.

"Kitty was to sit here, and Jack was to be over there with Mrs. Lutterworth. I changed things at the last moment."

"Why did you do that?" said Sir Charles, who for at least a year had meant to ask Kitty to be Lady Burnham either this week or next. He had been watching Mr. Gammage with surprise and disfavour ever since they sat down.

"I thought Kitty would be amused. She can talk

to you any day," said Pamela, who guessed at the state of her neighbour's affections, and had no patience with his delays. She wanted to be Kitty's bridesmaid, this week rather than next.

"I wonder if Kitty is amused," said Sir Charles.

"Can't you see that she is? Mrs. Bradwardine travelled home in the same ship with Mr. Blois. She wrote and told Kitty that he was charming."

"I wonder what attracted her?" said Sir Charles, fixing his fascinated eyes on Mr. Gammage, who had just taken an olive, and evidently did not like it.

"He's handsome—in a way," said Pamela.

"Yes—in a way," said Sir Charles, who was plain and big and sandy-haired.

They did not say anything more about Mr. Gammage just then, though they both kept their eyes on him; and Pamela saw that Kitty Bradwardine liked him less as he grew friendlier. Sir Charles, who was thirty-five and a man of the world, did not perceive this. He felt out of humour, and determined to have as little to do with the Australian as possible. But when the ladies left the room Colonel Blois moved to his wife's end of the table to talk to the rector, some of the other men gathered near him, and Mr. Gammage—thinking, as he said to himself, that "General Post was now *de règle*"—walked round to the opposite side, and took the chair Pamela had just left empty.

"Now I've left my port wine behind me," he said regretfully. But as he spoke he stretched his arm across the table for his glass. In doing so his cuff caught a slender vase of flowers, and upset it with a crash. No one said anything except Mr. Gammage, and he said too much in apology and explanation. He mopped up the water he had spilt with his handkerchief, and then spread it over the back of an adjoining chair to dry; then he refilled the vase with water and restored the flowers. He felt rather hot and conspicuous when he had finished, but he turned to the big good-tempered looking man now beside him and tried to engage him in conversation.

"The young lady next to me told me your name," he began, "and I dessay the young lady next to you mentioned mine."

Sir Charles admitted by a slight inclination of his head that he knew his present neighbour's name. Across the table his appearance had seemed to the clerk almost farmer-like, but at closer quarters this illusion did not prevail. However, with a laudable desire to please his audience, and led by Sir Charles's silence to seek an opening, Mr. Gammage next touched on crops.

"Turnips doing well?" he asked brightly.

"I believe so," said Sir Charles, rather astonished.

"Are you interested in turnips?"

"Can't say I know much about them till they're mashed," said Mr. Gammage, "then they're a second-class vegetable. What do you grow mostly then? Corn?"

Sir Charles roused himself to talk to the Australian. But whenever he touched on horses and sheep, two subjects he thought the young man should understand, he was baffled by a mysterious and bottomless ignorance.

"Didn't you live on your ranch?" he asked, at last.

"Not me," said Mr. Gammage. "I like something livelier. I couldn't stand the country long either here or there. I've only been here five days and I'm longing for a breath of the streets already. In fact, I think of running up for a week. I suppose you don't feel inclined to join forces and put me up to a thing or two. Of course, I'm a bit of a stranger in London. What's your club?"

"Oh! I belong to several," said Sir Charles, vaguely; and after a decent pause he turned away and began to talk to the rector.

Mr. Gammage was left rather lonely by this move, so he made bold to leave the table first and join the ladies. He found Mrs. Blois sitting with seven matrons, and that frightened him. He stood awkwardly by the door looking in vain for the two girls.

"Are you going to smoke on the terrace?" Mrs. Blois said kindly, and he fled there at once.

Pamela and Kitty were walking up and down here, and by this time they were in full agreement about Mr. Gammage.

"Why did you do it?" Kitty had said

"I thought he would amuse you," Pamela had replied.

"But he is impossible."

"Isn't he? I wanted you to find it out."

"Why?"

Pamela had not tried to explain.

"Everything is horrid," she said. "I feel like Mrs. Bennett in 'Pride and Prejudice.' A man ought to be ashamed to grab at a property, just because it happens to be entailed on him. What's an entail? Some silly law made by a lot of silly men. You would not find women inventing a law like that. They've too much sense and foresight."

"Do you say so to Colonel Blois?" asked Kitty.

"When I want a row I do," admitted Pamela.

Mr. Gammage had walked twice up and down the terrace beside the young ladies before the other men left the dining-room; and then it was only Sir Charles Burnham who came out there to them. But this exactly suited Mr. Gammage, who preferred a duet to a trio, and he at once proposed that they should leave the terrace and stroll about the garden.

"It would be rather nice," said Sir Charles, and he led the way.

Kitty walked demurely by his side; and they were halfway across the big lawn before they discovered that no one had followed them. They went a little further till they reached a sheltered seat built in a grass bank leading to a second lawn. There they stopped, and a nightingale sang to them.

"Why didn't they come?" said Kitty.

"I'm glad they didn't," said Sir Charles.

Kitty knew very well why.

"What do you think of Mr. Blois?" she asked.

"Not much," said Sir Charles, bluntly. "What do you?"

Kitty gave a little laugh—the mere sketch of a

laugh—and she looked at the moment absurdly like her mother.

“Kind hearts are more than coronets,” she said solemnly.

“I don’t like him at Greymarsh,” said Sir Charles; and then they were both silent for a time. A nightingale was singing in a bush quite near them, and the air was sweet with new-mown hay.

“Kitty,” said Sir Charles, suddenly, “I want to ask you a question.”

“I was just going to ask you one,” said Kitty.

“Oh, yours can wait,” said Sir Charles.

“But it was about hay,” said Kitty. “Is yours cut yet?”

“That fellow in there talked to me about turnips, and you talk to me about hay,” cried Sir Charles. “Do you suppose I’ve nothing in my head but crops? Look here, Kitty——”

“Sh!” said Kitty, “you’ll disturb the nightingale.”

But she did not divert her lover to-night as she had sometimes done before. He went on speaking, the nightingale went on singing, and before they returned to the house, the man and the girl had plighted their troth.

“I’m not happy about Pamela,” she said as they walked back together.

“She is a girl who can take care of herself, isn’t she?” said Sir Charles.

And then they arrived indoors, and found that every one was now in the drawing-room. The lamps were lighted, and Pamela rose from the piano as the lovers entered. Her eyes went straight to her friend’s face, and she saw the radiant light there; but Mr. Gammage kept close to her when she crossed the room. “I couldn’t persuade Miss Pamela to follow your example,” he said, “she thought the grass would be wet.”

“It was wet,” cried Pamela, addressing Sir Charles. “Look at Kitty’s shoes. She’ll get a cold and die if she doesn’t come with me and change them.”

“How clever of you,” said Kitty, as the two girls ran upstairs together.

Five minutes later, when they returned, Kitty wore black shoes instead of blue ones; and Pamela knew that the bridesmaids were to wear white, because she liked it better than any colour. Mrs. Blois met them at the door.

"I think a little music might drown the conversation," she said, with signs of distress, to Pamela. "There is no harm in it perhaps, but he has just told Mr. Lutterworth a story about some lady who said she had discussed her affairs with a curate, but not with a man: and he spoke of the rector as the Reverend Bradwardine, Kitty, dear. Not that these little things matter—but he is so easy and cheerful to-night—I like him better when he is quiet. Couldn't you tell him not to call Sir Charles 'baronet,' Pamela? It is so unusual it quite unnerves me. Besides, it makes people stare—they pretend not to, but, of course, I know they are staring inwardly—and what your father will say when we go to bed, I can't bear to think—but, perhaps, a little loud music——"

Pamela went boldly to the end of the room, where Mr. Gammage, with a crowd round him, thought he was getting on very well.

"My mother would like some music," she said to him. "I have not heard you sing yet. Perhaps——"

"Anything to oblige a lady," said Mr. Gammage, and he followed Pamela to the piano.

"What will you sing?" she said doubtfully.

"If you take my advice, you won't ask me to sing at all," said Mr. Gammage, in a confidential undertone. "I've no more voice than a foghorn. But I can whistle."

"Whistle!"

"Yes. You play the accompaniment and I'll whistle the tune. You try. It isn't half bad."

It was not half bad. Mr. Gammage whistled airs from "The Geisha," and scored a success. It was rather like a full-throated thrush singing to a piano accompaniment. But just as he had finished one tune, and was going to begin another, Dawes, the dignified,

impassive butler, made his way across the room, and approached the piano.

"What's he want?" said Mr. Gammage to Pamela, who took her hands from the keys and listened.

"The carrier has just arrived with the kangaroo, sir," he said to Mr. Gammage. "What do you wish done with it?"

XIX

MR. GAMMAGE tried to pull himself together, but, as he reflected afterwards, his head felt like a merry-go-round that would not stop when he bid it.

"There's some mistake," he said to Dawes. "I'm not expecting any kangaroos."

"It's addressed to you, sir," said Dawes.

"I saw the crate at the station this afternoon," said Kitty. "I was surprised when you said it was dead."

"My kangaroo is dead," said Mr. Gammage. "This must be another. Perhaps I'd better have a look at it."

He took two steps towards the door and then stopped short.

"Do kangaroos bite?" he asked of Sir Charles Burnham.

"Surely you know if they were running all over your ranch," cried Pamela.

"I was alluding to tame kangaroos then," said Mr. Gammage. "This may be a wild one."

"But who can have sent it?"

"Some Australian friend, I fancy," he said.

"I'll come with you," said Sir Charles; and the two men went out of the room, followed by Dawes.

"Where is the brute?" said Mr. Gammage.

"In the yard, sir," said Dawes, and he led the way.

A little group of servants, both men and women, were gathered round a crate deposited in a yard behind the house; but most of them dispersed at the sight of Dawes. Mr. Gammage eagerly examined the label,

which told him nothing. Sir Charles commented on the small size of the crate.

"It can't hold anything much bigger than a hare," he said.

"I vote we leave it alone till to-morrow," said Mr. Gammage. "What do you think, Baronet?"

"I'm afraid the little beast might starve or die of thirst," said Sir Charles.

"I suppose they are not dangerous when they are small?"

"I should think four men might overpower it," said Sir Charles, for one of the Greymarsh grooms stood with them.

"We can't open a crate with our hands," said Mr. Gammage. "We want proper tools."

The groom fetched a case-opener, and soon had a couple of bars off the top of the crate. Sir Charles put his hands inside, and lifted something apparently inanimate out of the straw. Meanwhile, Mr. Gammage's invention had been at work again.

"It escaped my memory just now," he said; "but I wrote to Jamrach the day after I got here, and asked him to quote his prices for kangaroos. I suppose he has sent this on spec. Rather sharp practice, I call it. Wonder what he'll want to leg me? What should you call a fair price for a kangaroo, Baronet?"

"I never bought one," said Sir Charles. "I don't know that I've ever seen a little thing like this. It must be what they call a wallaby."

"I shall refuse to keep it if it is in bad condition," said Mr. Gammage, loftily.

"Can't you tell us how to feed it?" said Sir Charles.

"I'm not a vet.," said Mr. Gammage. "I believe it's dead."

"It isn't," exclaimed Sir Charles; "it wriggled."

Two minutes later he re-entered the drawing-room with the little kangaroo in his arms. He was at once surrounded.

"Oh, what a darling!" cried Pamela.

"It opened its eyes and looked at me," said Kitty.

"Perhaps it would like a little milk," said Mrs. Blois.

"A kangaroo isn't a cat," growled the colonel.
"They are herbivorous."

"They eat grass," said Mrs. Lutterworth. "I ascertained that in Melbourne."

"How clever of you," said Mrs. Blois. "Now I should never have made inquiries, because I never expected to feel anxious about a kangaroo. It has shut its eyes again, poor dear, just as if it felt faint. Pamela, get my salts."

"Not while it's in my arms," protested Sir Charles.

"You don't want it to jump, do you?"

"Let me hold it," said Pamela; "I'm longing to."

"They're stronger than you think," said Sir Charles, rather unwillingly putting it in her arms.

"Take care," cried Mr. Gammage, very much excited, "the beggar's awake again."

There was a cry, a jump, and a general scatter as the kangaroo, disturbed by the transfer, gave a struggling leap from Pamela's weaker grasp, alighted on the floor, poised for a terrified moment on its tail and hind legs, gave a bound towards the open window, and disappeared into the moonlight. The men made after it, but by the time Sir Charles vaulted from the window-sill to the terrace, his quarry was bounding across the lawn. He and some of the younger men had a hunt for it round the garden, but it was not seen again that night.

"How heart-breaking to have loved a kangaroo and lost it," said Pamela. "But did you find out where it came from, Mr. Blois?"

"I believe so," said Mr. Gammage, significantly touching his head, and speaking in an undertone. "I must have ordered it last week and forgotten all about it. But I'll get you another, Miss Pamela. I'll fill the place with kangaroos if you like them."

He made this spirited offer while people were bidding good-bye, and Pamela managed to evade it because Kitty Bradwardine claimed her attention.

"There ought to be a touch of colour, I think," she said. "Amethyst——"

"Pale green," said Pamela.

"I don't know," said Kitty, her eyes wandering to her sandy-haired lover, who stood in the hall with his host near a table, where cigars and spirits were set. "Would pale green suit him? You'll only be a background for him, you know."

Pamela's laugh caught her father's ears, and brought to mind her delinquencies.

"Pamela," he said, when every one had gone, "don't run off. I want to speak to you."

"Of course you do," she said, linking her arm in his. "Let's go into the drawing-room. I just saw Mr. Blois disappear into the library with a box of cigars."

"I am not going to stand any nonsense" said the colonel, allowing himself to be led to a settee.

"You never do," said Pamela, meekly.

"Why didn't you sit where you were told?"

"I forget. But I love Sir Charles."

"My dear Pamela, what language!" said Mrs. Blois.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Colonel Blois of his wife. "Are you content to make your plan of the table and allow Pamela to upset it at the last moment?"

"I noticed that there was some change of places," said Mrs. Blois. "I thought it must be your doing, Anthony."

"My doing! Pamela!" The colonel paused for words.

"It was me," said Pamela, nodding at her step-mother. "I did it on my own."

"On what, dear? Of course I thought your father had got confused. I am sure I should with twenty people to send in."

"Confused—nonsense," said the colonel. "I told Mr. Blois to take Pamela, and she deliberately defied my instructions. Now all she can say is that she loves Sir Charles—a statement I consider disgraceful; and all you have to say is—perfect nonsense."

"If you weren't so cross, dad, I'd tell you something," said Pamela, putting her cheek close to his.

"I want you to tell me that you are ashamed of yourself," said he.

"What have I done?"

"Set your parents at defiance."

"Only one of them," said Pamela.

The colonel tried to rise from the sofa on which he was sitting, but Pamela clung to his arm, and whispered in his ear.

"She tells me that Burnham is engaged to Kitty Bradwardine," he said, in a mollified tone to his wife; "and she pretends that she brought it about by separating them at dinner. I am delighted to hear it, but it is no excuse for your behaviour, Pamela."

"It is an excuse for London and a new frock," she said. "I'm going to be bridesmaid."

"I wonder what that poor little kangaroo is doing?" said Mrs. Blois, after she had expressed all the surprise and pleasure expected of her. "I suppose he won't catch cold. If it was an ourang-outang, now——"

"I should like an ourang-outang," said Pamela. "I think I'll ask Mr. Blois to get me one. Australians seem to be very obliging. He says he'll fill the place with kangaroos to please me. If I asked an Englishman for an ourang-outang he'd probably refuse to have it in the house."

"I have not the least doubt that one Englishman would," said Colonel Blois.

He felt vaguely annoyed by his heir's offer to fill a place that was not his own yet, and when he went into the library to smoke, Mr. Gammage, who wanted to ask questions about every one he had seen, found him rather uncommunicative.

The mystery of the kangaroo was partially, but not wholly, explained to Mr. Gammage next day. He received an ill-spelt letter from some one who signed himself John Thompson, and said he had forwarded the wallaby as agreed, and hoped it would arrive safely. There was no demand for payment.

Mr. Gammage hardly knew what to do, so he did nothing. He thought that if John Thompson wanted money he could write and ask for it. Meanwhile the creature appeared and disappeared and had not been caught yet. One day at sundown Pamela found it feeding on the croquet-lawn. The keepers caught it in the coverts, and the head-gardener vowed he would shoot it, and the villagers trespassed in search of it. The squire and the "Encyclopædia Britannica" could not convince the keepers that the game was in no danger; and the local poacher blessed it for drawing suspicion from himself.

"I'm going to London to-morrow," Mr. Gammage said to Pamela on the Thursday after the dinner-party.

"What fun," said Pamela, knocking some croquet-balls together.

Her father had taken his guest round the golf-links this morning, and had come back with his clubs and his temper damaged. So after lunch Pamela invited the Australian to play croquet. The whole family was finding the week a long one, but the master of the house would not admit it. He grew angry if his women-folk showed any distaste for the young man.

"It isn't much fun by yourself," said Mr. Gammage. "I wish you were coming too—and Mrs. Blois, of course. Couldn't you manage it, Miss Pamela? We'd do a theatre every night, and I'd stand the hotel bill with pleasure."

"I'm afraid it's impossible," she said, wishing her father stood behind the nearest bush. "I must be here on Saturday for the Rectory garden-party."

"They haven't sent me an invite, 'ave they?" said Mr. Gammage.

"You would have come with us if you had been here," said Pamela.

As a matter of fact, the Rectory had made no overtures to the young man, and though Mr. Gammage desired to avoid Mrs. Bradwardine, he was quite inclined to resent her neglect.

"I'm coming back in good time for your garden-

party on the 28th," he said, muffing his hoop as he spoke. "Can I bring any little thing from London for it?"

"Oh, thank you," said Pamela, measuring the distance between his ball and hers. "What sort of little thing?"

"Cakes, I was thinking of—the village confectioner don't seem first-class, judging by his window—but, to be sure, there's the parcel post. How people ever could live in the country before the days of telegrams and parcel post——"

"Any one would think you were a cockney rather than an Australian," said Pamela, hitting his ball sharply.

"What a funny idea," said Mr. Gammage, and walked away to his ball. But before long she came up to it again and took it with her own till she touched the winning-post.

"I'm afraid we're rather unevenly matched," she said, thinking he must find the part of passive spectator a dull one.

"Only in croquet, I hope," said Mr. Gammage.

Pamela was quite pleased to look up and see a footman coming across the lawn towards her. He said that the ladies from the Rectory were in the drawing-room, and that Mrs. Blois could not be found in the house.

"I must go in," said Pamela to Mr. Gammage.

"I'll follow you in half a mo," said he.

Directly she was out of sight he sat down and lit a cigar. He was in no hurry to confront Mrs. Bradwardine again. On Monday, when she dined here, he managed to avoid her. They had in fact not exchanged a single word. But, of course, this would be impossible except when a good many other people were present, and at any moment awkward subjects might crop up. To begin with, there was the kangaroo. Apparently Roger had written to say that he would bring one, and had bought one on board, and either that one or another had actually arrived. Mrs. Bradwardine probably knew all about it, and knew at any rate that no kangaroo belonging to him had died on board.

Of course the sunstroke could be made useful on many occasions, but Mr. Gammage began to fear it might have drawbacks too. The degree to which his memory had been affected by it became both serious and absurd. He did not want Pamela to think him weak in his mind, or for that matter the colonel either. New difficulties might arise out of such a state of things.

When he had finished his cigar it was nearly tea-time, and he wondered whether the Bradwardines would stay for it. A sharp shower of rain came on, but he did not go back to the house because he would have been seen from the drawing-room window. So he shuffled his way through the shrubbery to the kitchen garden where he knew of a shed with a seat. The rain before he reached shelter came down with fury, and he half shut his eyes as he ran headlong through it. He could hear no sound except the hubbub of the storm, and he rushed right into the shed and stood there dripping before he saw that it was occupied. Mrs. Blois and Pamela sat there with the ladies from the Rectory. They had come here to look at a bed of irises and had been caught by the rain.

"You've got wet, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Blois, and then she turned to Mrs. Bradwardine. "You know Mr. Blois?" she said.

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Bradwardine, looking curiously at the hunched and streaming figure sheering away from her. "I've been expecting you to come and look me up, Mr. Blois."

"I shall be delighted, I'm sure—some day when I'm at liberty," said Mr. Gammage, edging towards the storm again.

"I hear the kangaroo is not caught yet," said Kitty.

"No," said Mr. Gammage, "I was just having a little 'unt for it. I think I'll go, if you'll excuse me."

He disappeared as suddenly as he had come. Mrs. Blois sighed. Mrs. Bradwardine began to talk about Kitty's wedding.

XX

A SLIGHT cloud that threatened to become a big one hung over the Greymarsh household, or rather it hung between Pamela and her father, separating them impalpably. What Colonel Blois called the fancies of a girl were endangering his cherished plans which he desired with blind impatience to see consummated. He thought of the man-child who should be heir of his body, of his name, and of his house and land. He thought so much of him that he did not think enough of the girl who stood between. Her reluctance appeared to him like the little obstacle you surmount in order to reach your goal; and he refused to see that the sacrifice expected of her was greater than what he offered himself.

"He is going to be Blois of Greymarsh," he said to his wife. "That's enough. My grandson is going to be Blois of Greymarsh, too; Pamela ought to see it in that light. If I can stand the fellow, surely she can."

"She says she is quite willing to stand him to the extent you do," said Mrs. Blois. "She told me so only this morning. The child wishes to meet you half-way."

Poor Mrs. Blois felt bewildered when her husband received this assurance with every mark of extreme displeasure. In her heart she sympathized with Pamela, and in her fluffy way she showed the girl that she did; but she would no more have dared to oppose her husband openly than to hunt tigers. She thought it rather unladylike to allude to a marriage at all before the gentleman had officially proposed, but it was the colonel who sinned on this count. She often found that her rigid little canons of refinement were ruthlessly swept away by him. He had his own canons, of course, and they clashed with his present desires. He knew well enough that his friends, and that exasperating inner critic called a conscience, would condemn him. On the other hand, every rood of Blois land would call him blessed.

No doubt the situation had its disagreeable side,

The whole household felt that it was rid of an incubus when the young man went to London, and Pamela dreaded the day of her garden-party because it would bring the Australian back to Greymarsh. She could have put up with him in any guise except that of a suitor whose pretensions her father favoured. She would have thought him a stupid, rather amiable, very vulgar young man, and she would never have dwelt on defects for which want of brain and breeding were responsible. It was in her lover, in her future husband, that these lapses grew to crimes. Pamela, who had always been as happy as a skylark, saw trouble ahead : trouble that she must face alone. Her energetic little mouth took a firmer set as she looked forward to a battle royal with her father : a battle she meant to win, but hated to fight. She feared the scars it might leave. As for the property, she thought of it with grieving, for she loved her home ; but she was not responsible for the law that gave it to a stranger and drove her away.

Mr. Gammage returned from London about an hour before people began to arrive, and as he could not see any of the family about, he went straight upstairs to dress. He felt a little uneasy in his mind because his tailor, on being asked about the correct garments for garden-parties, had said something of frock-coats and silk hats, but also something of tweeds and flannels. Mr. Gammage did not want to betray his ignorance. He had said, in an airy way, "Same as for Hurlingham, I suppose ;" and the tailor had said "Just so, sir." Mr. Gammage had often met the crowds pouring out of London to Ranelagh and Hurlingham, so, as he said to himself, he ought to know as well as any one. ~~But he had always looked~~ at the ladies driving by and not at the men, and he found he only had a confused memory of well-cut black coats and tall hats. What went with them he had forgotten. While he was still debating what to do he heard a knock at the door, and George, the underfootman, arrived with hot water and the offer of his services. Mr. Gammage refused them, but detained the man to ask him the question on his mind.

"I say, George," he began, "what has the colonel got on this afternoon?"

"Got on, sir?" repeated George, who was a dull-witted young man.

"What will he wear?"

"A suit of light tweeds, I believe, sir. That is what he wore at the Rectory on Saturday."

"But what do the younger gentleman wear?"

"Flannels or tweeds, sir."

"Not frock-coats and silk hats?"

"Sometimes, sir."

"And flannels?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Gammage wished it was easier to blast information out of people, and he hoped he was not making a mistake when he put on a white flannel shirt and trousers, brown shoes, a frock-coat, and a silk hat. He tried the effect of a cap instead, but he decided that he did not like it. He could always fetch one if he wanted to play tennis, he thought. From his window he could see that people were beginning to arrive already. Colonel Blois was on the lawn with Mrs. Blois and Pamela. A little group of friends stood about near them. Mr. Gammage saw the conspicuous figure of Sir Charles Burnham—he wore tweeds—and the shrivelled figure of Mr. Lutterworth—he wore black. Pamela's gown was of muslin, thin pale blue and white muslin, with a modish voluminous skirt and fluttering frills. She looked like a beautiful blue butterfly.

Mr. Gammage took a final glance at himself and went downstairs. Of course the very people he wanted to avoid were in the hall. It seemed full of Bradwardines to poor Mr. Gammage as he tried to make his way unnoticed into the garden; and Mrs. Bradwardine's extended hand interposed itself between him and escape.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Blois?" she said; and her bland unconsciousness of anything unusual in his costume set him at ease, and taught her eighteen-year-old-son how he ought to behave.

She did not mean to walk into the garden with this impossible person at her side, but the rector made some movement towards the door that she could not circumvent, and she actually appeared on the lawn almost hand-in-hand with Mr. Gammage. That night she dutifully assented when her husband said that clothes were conventions, and that only petty minds attached importance to them; but she added that the Australian had damned himself in the eyes of the county, and it seemed a pity. The rector said that some of the greatest heroes in history might have made the same mistake—Leonidas, for instance, or Oliver Cromwell. Mrs. Bradwardine said she could believe a good deal of Cromwell, but not that he dressed like a fool and talked like a bagman; and this was all the thanks our Mr. Gammage got for trying to make himself agreeable to her as they walked from the house to the lawn.

"So Miss Kitty is going to marry the baronet?" he had begun at once.

"Yes," said Mrs. Bradwardine, also wishing to be agreeable and accept the young man's overtures in the way they were meant.

"Very good match, I suppose," continued Mr. Gammage.

"I hope Sir Charles Burnham thinks so," said Mrs. Bradwardine.

Mr. Gammage would probably have put his foot into it still further if at that moment he had not caught his host's eye fixed on him in dismay. He saw him go up to Sir Charles Burnham and whisper something, and he saw Sir Charles look dubious and reluctant, as if he had been offered a job he only half liked. People were arriving every moment now, and of course Colonel Blois, with his wife and daughter, were busily occupied. Mr. Gammage sought for some one he knew who was at leisure to speak to him, and rather to his surprise Sir Charles Burnham responded to his glance and left Kitty's side. He not only did this, but he suggested that they should go indoors and have a smoke.

"Won't it seem rather unsociable—to leave the ladies so soon?" said Mr. Gammage.

But Sir Charles pooh-poohed the idea and led him inside the house. When they were solemnly seated opposite each other in the library Sir Charles cleared his throat. Then he lighted his cigar, then he cleared his throat again. Even Mr. Gammage perceived that he had something to say and found it difficult to begin.

"I wish you'd tell me something straight," said Mr. Gammage, looking fixedly at the other man's tweeds and Panama hat.

"I want to," said Sir Charles.

"I've no idea what you're going to cough out," said Mr. Gammage. "What I want to know is, are my clothes the correct thing? I should not like to look particular."

"Just my feeling—about clothes," said Sir Charles. "And in England we are so beastly hide-bound."

"If you ask me," said Mr. Gammage. "I call it rather free and easy to wear a suit of dittoes at a garden-party. I wouldn't do it myself."

Sir Charles went on smoking. His quiet, humorous face betrayed nothing but a friendly interest in what the young man opposite was saying.

"At the same time," Mr. Gammage continued, "I don't wish to appear over-dressed. It's bad form. And I don't see any one else in this combination. Perhaps it's a little too much for the occasion."

"Perhaps it is," said Sir Charles, cocking his eye at it.

"I asked the tailor and I asked the footman. They both said frock-coats and flannels were worn at garden-parties."

"But not together," said Sir Charles. "At least not as a rule—in this neighbourhood."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Gammage, "one must give in to local customs, of course—and I suppose you ought to know."

He seemed rather put out and half incredulous, but to Sir Charles's relief he finally decided to take

advice. When he reappeared in the garden he wore a straw hat and one of Roger's quiet well-cut tweed coats, and he looked as handsome as the young man in *Punch* who was a Greek god in flannels, but a bank-clerk in broadcloth. If Julia could have seen him she would have lost her heart to him afresh, but his fickle mind hardly ever sent a thought or a regret back to Julia. Pamela drew him like a lode star.

This afternoon, however, he found Pamela elusive. Whenever he approached her she civilly introduced him to some one else, and in course of time he reckoned that he had given all the old ladies present a spirited picture of life in the Australian bush. Colonel Blois, too, introduced him to some of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and they worried him about breeds of sheep and the fiscal question from the colonial point of view, matters in which he took no interest whatever. As the afternoon went on he felt more and more out of it. Amongst a hundred people there were bound to be some whose manners were not equal to an encounter with his. Sir Charles Burnham could tell Mr. Gammage his clothes were wrong without hurting his feelings; but Mr. Skeffington-Blewitt (every one knows Blewitt's Hygienic Pills) shivered and stiffened when he heard the young man's common accent. So did Mrs. Skeffington-Blewitt, whose style was die-away and anæmic. She said that the Australian's vowels gave her neuralgia, and she fled from him as if she feared contagion. On the other hand, the local duchess, born a Fitzurse and a fool, rather took to Mr. Gammage. She arrived very late, and only stayed half an hour. When she got up to go, the Bradwardines, with Sir Charles Burnham, Mrs. Blois, and Pamela, formed a little group on the terrace, a few stragglers still strolled about the garden, while Colonel Blois was in the hall watching his guests drive away.

"You must bring your Australian friend to see me," the duchess said to Mrs. Blois. "I've been telling him about my little club in Camberwell for city clerks, and he is coming to help us. He has been

talking to me about the inner life of the city clerk with such delightful sympathy. I feel as if one of my dear Camberwell friends had been entertaining me. He has quite their humour and their curious accent."

Mr. Gammage stood awkwardly at the edge of the group the duchess had now joined, for when she rose he followed her. As she finished speaking he saw Mrs. Bradwardine's eyes turn his way with a disquieting gleam of surprise in them.

"Where have you studied the ways of the city clerk?" she said.

"Over there," he said glibly. "I employ a lot of clerks."

"I wonder if you could place one or two of my friends?" said the duchess.

"I dessay," said Mr. Gammage. "I'll look into it."

"What salary do you pay a clerk out there?"

"My manager sees to all that," said Mr. Gammage.

"I thought you had wound up your affairs over there," said Mrs. Bradwardine.

"Partially. . . . But a big concern like mine isn't made in a day, and isn't done with in a day. I may have to go over there again."

"How bold," said Mrs. Bradwardine.

"Bold!"

There was a note in the lady's voice, and a look in the lady's eye that Mr. Gammage did not like.

"Why bold?" he asked.

"You know best," said she.

Mr. Gammage sat down on the low stone balustrade of the terrace because he was suddenly seized with panic. He had played the game so well, he had never let his fears control him, and now without warning, at a word and a glance, fear had him by the throat. His face changed, his lips were livid as Mrs. Bradwardine, detaching herself from the others, came close up to him.

"What have you done with my charming friend of the *Electric*?" she said. "Is it his game you are playing? and how long is it to last?"

"What do you mean?" stammered Mr. Gammage.

"You're not Roger Blois," she said disdainfully.

And then she walked away, leaving Mr. Gammage to gaze after her vacantly. His thoughts were tumultuous and contradictory; and he could not make up his mind whether he had been wise to admit nothing or foolish to sit there like a zany and deny nothing. He wanted to run after her and ask her what she knew, and what she only guessed, and whether she meant to keep silence; but he held himself in check. Suspense is unpleasant, but certain and disgraceful exposure is worse.

XXI

A GREAT marsh intersected by creeks lay between the village and the sea at Greymarsh. It was fringed in the distance by sand dunes, rising like a ridge of pigmy mountains against the sky. In summer, the sea pink, the sea lavender, and many other marsh flowers spread a delicate colour over it, each crop lasting till the high tides washed and bleached them. Two of the larger creeks were used as harbours by the fishermen, and they were crowded with small craft while everywhere about the marsh there were boats lying high and dry.

Sometimes, however, the sea came creeping close to the high-road itself, floating every boat; flooding the creeks and pastures, and making of the quiet English landscape a lake that came and vanished like a mirage. About fifty years ago, one of these high tides had come so far and done so much damage that Pamela's grandfather, at great expense, had built a sea-wall extending for miles and protecting the adjacent farm lands. The flat grass-grown top of this dam, locally known as the "bank," was a favourite walk with the villagers, but only on Sunday afternoons when they had leisure to promenade in twos and threes a mile or so from home. On a week-day, Pamela knew that she would have the "bank" to herself. A little later in the year, if she walked as far as the village of Suffery, she might come across a man squatting in

the long grass on the look-out for wild ducks or pass a child gathering mushrooms. But during the early summer the peace and loneliness here were hardly ever broken, and the girl often came to watch the sunsets and the birds and the incoming tide.

On the afternoon after the garden-party at Grey-marsh, she had walked a long way before she felt inclined to turn home. She knew that the water just beginning to creep like a sluggish snake into the creeks, would gain in volume and swiftness every moment, and would before sunset wash over every petal of the sea thrift now covering the great expanse of marsh with a rose-coloured sheen. To-morrow the blush of it would be a little fainter, and a few days hence it would have died away. This evening the slanting rays of the sun touched it brilliantly. As long as Pamela walked away from her home, she did not see a tree anywhere; only the sand dunes on the horizon, the great marsh all aglow, the stranded fishing-boats and the flight of tern and wild duck across the shining sky. But at six o'clock she unwillingly called Ruffles from the vain pursuit of gulls and turned back. She was nearly an hour's walk from home, and at Greymarsh they were old-fashioned in their ways, and dined at half-past seven. By this time the tide was racing along the creek that stretched like a river from Greymarsh to Suffery Harbour. As she strolled home she watched the quiet inrush of water that soon spread from the "bank" to the horizon like a lake, on whose smooth surface the lights of sunset turned to burning gold. Boats floated lazily at anchor now, and presently one or two red sails moved out from Greymarsh Harbour. Facing Pamela lay the straggling village, where she knew every man, woman, and child, while behind it rose the higher land and the woods that hid her home.

It was a bitter thought to the girl that she must some day be driven forth from this home, but it was not one that had occurred with any persistence until lately. The very young expect their elders to live

for ever, and when Pamela had looked forward at all she saw her father at Greymarsh and herself there, too. She was not a girl whose dreams were of marriage, and she had never yet been in love. Few young men came to the quiet country household, and not one had stirred her fancy. But now a man had come and brought trouble with him. Since yesterday he had made his intentions plain, and Pamela foresaw that she was not to be spared the disagreeable business of refusing him.

When she was still more than half a mile from the end of the bank she was not much surprised to see a solitary figure approaching her and gradually take the shape of the Australian. She had escaped after tea while he was smoking with her father, but he knew that she often walked here, and he had evidently come to meet her. In the distance his tall and well-shaped figure was attractive, and Pamela could not help wishing, as he was fated to cross her path, that some one had found him in his cradle and brought him up a gentleman. She had not lived long enough in the world to know that in these democratic days people are half afraid to admit a distinction she took for granted: but if she had known she would only have laughed at such disingenuous nonsense. As Mr. Gammage approached her he twirled his stick by way of a greeting as he asked her why she hadn't mentioned that she wanted a walk.

"Two are company," he said, turning as he came up to her.

"I brought Ruffles," said Pamela.

"'E can't talk," said Mr. Gammage.

"I didn't want to talk."

"Well—I call it a lonely walk for a young lady. Suppose you met a rough character?"

Pamela watched a fishing-boat with outspread sails glide through the cold grey water towards a golden pathway made by the setting sun.

All the romance of life shone on the water, she thought, and all the sordid prose of it walked by her side.

"I've been having quite a business conversation with your father," said Mr. Gammage, abruptly.

"Oh!" said Pamela, watching the golden sails turn chill and grey again.

"He's been telling me a lot about his property and how it is he can't leave most of it to you—in fact, none of it except a bit of money he's saved. I must say it seems hard lines."

"English law," said Pamela.

"I dessay. Still your father can't exactly enjoy the idear of me steppin' in to everything. I reelly wonder he's as genial as he is."

"We should be very silly and unjust if we blamed you. Of course, we wish there had been a son instead of me."

"I don't," said Mr. Gammage.

"Naturally," said Pamela.

"I don't mean what you mean either. I wasn't thinking of the property then. I was thinking of you."

"You mustn't trouble about me," said Pamela.

"I shall have my mother's money, besides——"

"I'm not troubling . . . not that way," Mr. Gammage tried to explain. "You don't quite take my meaning. I'm glad you're not a boy, because the property . . . the property . . . well, the long and the short of it is, the property can be yours, if you'll say the word."

"I'm afraid my father has not explained well," said Pamela. "The land will no more be yours to give than it is his to give."

"'With all my worldly goods I thee endow.' That's the way out of it, Miss Pamela, I do assure you. I can see that your father's agreeable, and I'm more than agreeable. I'm keen. It just depends on you."

"I'm much obliged to you," began Pamela.

"No occasion," said Mr. Gammage. "I make the offer to please myself."

"I cannot accept it," said Pamela.

"Why? What's wrong with me?" inquired Mr. Gammage. "I've generally had pretty good luck with the fair sex."

Pamela walked on silently and wished herself at home.

"I know two who'd marry me to-morrow," continued Mr. Gammage, in an offended tone.

"Then go and marry them," said Pamela, losing her thin-spun patience.

"Not at all," said Mr. Gammage, blandly. "I want you. A man in my position has to think of the head of his table and all that kind of thing. Besides, what I observed was that they'd marry me: a very different pair of shoes from my marrying them. To tell you the truth, they are not quite my form. That's what you are, Miss Pamela, down to the ground."

"Well," said Pamela, "I've given you the only answer I can. You must find some one else to sit at the head of your table. I never shall."

"By the way you treat me," argued Mr. Gammage, "anyone would think I had everything to gain and you nothing."

Pamela's firm mouth set in determined lines, and her grey eyes looked disdainfully in front of her.

"If ever I marry it won't be for gain," she said.

Mr. Gammage looked across the water, and wondered what he could say next. He admired Pamela warmly, but he had never felt what he called "at home" with her, and he had never gone a-wooing with so little success.

"Think it over," he said after a pause. "There's no 'urry. I expect you'll come round. It's a great thing for me having the colonel on my side."

Pamela was thankful when they reached the village, where the sudden onslaught made by her puppy on a large fierce cat changed the subject. The cat got the best of it, and Pamela, with the help of a friendly fisherman, rescued Ruffles in a scratched and dejected condition. She talked to the puppy about his sins, and to Mr. Gammage about the puppy from the village to her own front door, and then she marched straight into the library, where she was rather sorry to find Mrs. Blois sitting with her father. She had strung herself up to confront the colonel, and, though her stepmother was an ally, her presence acted as the presence of a woman

acts in a quarrel between two men. Even the man with whom she agrees would rather have her away.

The evening post had just come, and Mrs. Blois had received a letter that seemed to occupy her. She did not observe the look of tension on Pamela's face, but addressed her at once in a tone of rambling information,

"A letter from your Aunt Irene, my dear. She invites us all there for a week. Isn't it lucky that Marguerite disappointed you yesterday? Now, that gown will be quite fresh next Tuesday."

"Is Aunt Irene giving a garden-party then?" asked Pamela.

"Not Aunt Irene, dear. The Skeffington-Blewitts. Don't you remember about it being their silver-wedding next week? and the Bradwardines are going to buy wedding-clothes at the same time, and there is an agricultural show on, too, so Sir Charles will travel with them. I should have thought the Skeffington-Blewitts would have entertained here and not in London, but I suppose they have a great many friends there. Mrs. Skeffington-Blewitt asked me to bring you up next week, and when I mentioned that we had Mr. Blois staying with us, she asked him too. That was when she first came. She did not mention it again when she said good-bye."

"She had seen Mr. Blois by that time," said Pamela. Her father looked at her sharply.

"I should like to accept Aunt Irene's invitation," said Pamela.

"We don't quite know what to do," said Mrs. Blois. "Your father seems to think you are wanted at home just now. Of course you are more of a companion for a young man than we old folk. If your aunt would invite him too . . ."

"How long is Mr. Blois going to stay here?" asked Pamela.

"As long as he pleases," said the colonel.

"I should like to stay with Aunt Irene until he has gone," said Pamela.

"What?" thundered her father.

colonel, goaded to forgetfulness, lifted his hand and boxed the girl's ears. Mrs. Blois uttered a groan. Pamela turned red and white in turn, and looked at first as if she would like to follow her father's example. She stood there rigid and implacable, watching his instant repentance.

"Now I'll never give in," she said; "never."

Then she walked out of the room, too angry to realize yet how completely her father's lapse gave her the best of it. There was a painful silence between husband and wife when the girl had gone. Colonel Blois paced the room as a Polar bear paces his cage, while Mrs. Blois dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief.

"If only the young man had been more prepossessing," she began.

"My dear Amy," said the colonel, "you have had the bringing up of Pamela since she was thirteen, and I really can't congratulate you on your success. Of course she is my child, and not yours——"

"That's it," said Mrs. Blois, tearfully.

"What do you mean?" said the colonel, stopping his promenade and throwing himself into his usual chair.

"You're so much alike," murmured his wife.

"Alike! Where? How? I don't see it."

"Even Dawes remarked on it only the other day, when she cuffed that boy for ill-treating a cat. 'Miss Blois flared up just like the Squire,' " he said.

The colonel gave a little grunt.

"Well, now I've cuffed her," he said uneasily. "I'm sorry I did it, Amy. You take things to heart so. I don't suppose Pamela will think twice about it, eh?"

"I've no idea," said Mrs. Blois. "Sometimes I'm afraid I don't understand either you or Pamela as well as I could wish."

"Oh, I know you take Pamela's part against me in this affair," said the colonel, getting angry again. "Women never can look at anything from a business-like point of view."

"But, Anthony," said Mrs. Blois, "are you attracted by the young man yourself? You take him up rather

"You have not brought me up to think so. I can't change all my tastes—all my standards, in a day."

"Your father hopes he will improve," said Mrs. Blois. "I think he has improved a little already. Of course it is a great opportunity for you to sacrifice yourself, Pamela, and self-sacrifice is such a sweet, womanly——"

She stopped, intimidated by her husband's frowning glances, and wondering what she had said to annoy him.

"No one expects a modern girl to think of any one but herself," he said angrily.

"Of whom are you thinking when you desire me to marry a man I detest?" asked Pamela.

"You're impertinent," argued the colonel.

"Don't you see, Pamela," pleaded Mrs. Blois, "it is the property your father has in mind. He wants you to enjoy it and your heirs after you—not strangers. A girl really gets used to her husband in time. I've often noticed it. After all, if you were a princess, you'd have to marry for dynastic reasons. It's the same thing."

"If Pamela was a princess, she would throw away an empire because she didn't like the shape of the emperor's nose," said the colonel. "I've no patience with such folly, and I'm not going to give in to it. I shall refuse your aunt's invitation for the present. You will stay here and be civil to Mr. Blois, and next time he proposes you will accept him."

Pamela sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing, her anger flaming high.

"If he dares to propose again——" she began.

Her father stopped short and faced the girl. They were very close to each other. Her hands were clenched, her brows were frowning.

"Do you set me at defiance?" said the colonel.

Pamela did not speak or smile or shrug her shoulders; yet by some slight relaxation of her lips, and the derisive light in her eyes, she vexed him beyond endurance. Then in one miserable moment a deed as inexcusable as a stab made history in that decorous room. The

colonel, goaded to forgetfulness, lifted his hand and boxed the girl's ears. Mrs. Blois uttered a groan. Pamela turned red and white in turn, and looked at first as if she would like to follow her father's example. She stood there rigid and implacable, watching his instant repentance.

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"Oh, I know you take Pamela's part against me in this affair," said the colonel, getting angry again. "Women never can look at anything from a business-like point of view."

"But, Anthony," said Mrs. Blois, "are you attracted by the young man yourself? You take him up rather

shortly sometimes, and you have once or twice alluded to him as the fellow. Now, you would never call any of our friends—Charles Burnham, for instance—a fellow.”

“Marriage is not always a question of sentiment,” said the colonel. “Sometimes it is a matter of expediency. I want Pamela’s son to be Squire of Grey-marsh, if I must put it plainly.”

“I thought perhaps that was your idea,” said Mrs. Blois. She looked helplessly across the room, and gave a little shudder of aversion. Then her nervous hands twisted her handkerchief into knots and her breath came swiftly, as for the first time since her marriage she openly opposed her husband. “I think it’s too much to ask of Pamela,” she said. “We don’t want the child to be miserable.”

The colonel looked miserable. His anger had evaporated, and a fit of gloom succeeded. He took up Mrs. Loraine’s letter and read it again.

“Perhaps for Irene’s sake we had better let her go to Wimbledon next week,” he said. “There is no great hurry, and she may come back in a more sensible frame of mind.”

Mrs. Blois felt so grateful for this concession that she went straight upstairs to Pamela’s room to tell her of it. She found the whole room littered with clothes. Martha knelt before a huge open trunk, and tried to pack it as quickly as her young mistress desired; while Pamela was at the same time getting ready for dinner, and apparently issuing instructions for a journey.

“My dear child!” exclaimed Mrs. Blois, in amazement. “What can you be doing?”

Pamela removed a pile of blouses from a chair, so that her step-mother could sit down. Then she dismissed her maid.

“I’m going to Wimbledon to-morrow,” she said, when Martha had left the room.

“Your father is willing that you should accept your Aunt Irene’s invitation,” said Mrs. Blois. “I came to tell you so. But you are asked for next Monday.”

“I am going to-morrow,” said Pamela.

"My dear, I don't know that your father——"

"I have no father," said the girl.

She was sitting on the floor, with blouses heaped about her, and she began to unfold some of them with an indifferent air that distressed and deceived Mrs. Blois.

"There is the ten-minutes' bell," she said, starting at the sound of it. "We must get ready, or your father will not be pleased. I hope you are going to behave well, Pamela. I don't want to preach, but you really seem to forget the fifth commandment sometimes. I don't call it quite respectful to say you have no father, when he is in his dressing-room, and you must admit that men know better than women about land and all that sort of thing."

"I'm sorry you're worried," said Pamela, perching on the arm of her step-mother's chair and stroking her hair. "I'm sorry you married into our family. We're beasts, I know."

"Oh, my dear, what dreadful words you use, and what nonsense you talk," said poor Mrs. Blois. "You know very well that I'm devoted to both of you, but I must say that in his own house I think your father's word should be law."

"That's why I'm going out of it," said Pamela.

"But not to-morrow."

Pamela made no promises, but she arrived downstairs in time for dinner. She had decided that it was more grown-up and dignified to appear than to sulk upstairs. Besides, she wanted to do battle with her father. Her weapons were, of course, various and intangible. To begin with, she had put on a vivid red gown that added years and subtle enchantment to her girlish figure. She had twisted her mother's pearls round her neck and hastily piled up her fair hair in a fashion that gave her height and consequence. When she entered the room her serene grey eyes looked beyond Colonel Blois as if he had been a spirit she could not see, and he glanced at her with uneasy realization of her beauty and her womanhood. During dinner she joined adroitly in general talk and managed incon-

spicuously to ignore her father. Mrs. Blois, with her flow of detached remarks, played into the girl's hands. Mr. Gammage stared at the lady who would none of him, and when he was left alone with his host irritated him by uttering a succession of portentous sighs.

"Aren't you well?" said Colonel Blois at last.

"Down on my luck," said Mr. Gammage.

The colonel refilled his glass and pushed the decanter towards his guest. The young man jarred on him acutely to-night.

Meanwhile Pamela had put on a cloak, cleverly tucked up her long skirts and gone on her bicycle to the Rectory, which was only about half a mile from the Manor House. She found the Bradwardines in the garden with Sir Charles Burnham, who had dined there; and when she had been there for a little while she managed to detach Mrs. Bradwardine from the others and walk to the greenhouse with her.

"I'm going to Wimbledon to-morrow," she said.

"Kitty and I go to London on Monday," said Mrs. Bradwardine. "Shall we meet, then, at the Skeffington-Blewitts' on Tuesday?"

They had reached the greenhouse now, and Mrs. Bradwardine pointed out the plant they had ostensibly come to see. Then she looked at Pamela, whom she had known since her birth; but she waited for the girl to speak first. Pamela gathered a leaf of scented verbenas, and crushed it between her fingers.

"Do you believe in self-sacrifice?" she said, her young face sombre and reflective.

"Not always," said Mrs. Bradwardine.

"Dad has set his heart on it—and I can't do it—and he and I are bad friends. I wish I knew for certain which of us is right."

Mrs. Bradwardine suddenly felt the deep responsibility cast on her by her suspicions. They were too vague to shape in words, too haunting to reject, too outrageous to act on hurriedly.

"You must wait," she said.

"But they won't—he proposed to-night——"

Mrs. Bradwardine uttered a horrified ejaculation.

"I refused him—and now dad and I are bad friends—real bad friends. He insists, you know."

"Can't you get away?"

"I'm going—to-morrow morning. I've wired to Aunt Irene, and I've told mother, but not dad. I don't believe he'd let me go."

Mrs. Bradwardine paused judiciously before she spoke again.

"You were right to refuse him," she said in time. "There is something wrong—something I don't understand yet."

Pamela looked up alert and interested.

"I think you are right to go," Mrs. Bradwardine went on.

"But what do you mean? What can be wrong?"

"The young man."

"Of course he is—all wrong—but we have known that from the beginning."

"I didn't know it on the *Electric*."

"That is the puzzle."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bradwardine, "that is the puzzle"; and then she began to talk of her plants again.

The next day when Mr. Gammage went down at an early hour to breakfast he found Pamela in the hall apparently dressed for a journey. Her trunks were being put on a cab at the front door.

"Are you going away?" he said with a crestfallen face.

"Yes," said Pamela, "I'm going to Wimbledon."

"Rather sudden, isn't it? What became of you after dinner last night?"

"I went to say good-bye at the Rectory."

"Oh!" said Mr. Gammage.

Pamela ran down the hall steps, got into the cab and rumbled away. Dawes and George returned from the front door.

"Why didn't Miss Pamela have her own carriage?" inquired Mr. Gammage.

"Miss Blois ordered the cab by telephone last night,

sir," said the disapproving Dawes, and passed magisterially into the dining-room.

In this way Mr. Gammage learnt that perhaps he ought to call Pamela Miss Blois. Otherwise he learnt nothing. Breakfast was half over when Colonel Blois looked up from his letters and asked his wife why Pamela was late again this morning. Mr. Gammage stared at his host as if he could hardly believe his ears.

"Miss Pamela left for Wimbledon this morning," he said. "She started at 8.30 with a lot of luggage. She bade good-bye at the Rectory last night."

The colonel received a shock, looked hastily across the table at his wife, and saw that she was more alarmed than astonished.

"I suppose you thought she ought to go to-day," he suggested.

Mrs. Blois rose to the occasion without departing from the literal truth, which was the only form of truth she comprehended.

"The dressmakers are so busy now," she said vaguely. "And the garden-party is on Tuesday."

XXIII

ROGER had been ill again for twenty-four hours, but this time Mrs. Loraine and a sensible doctor took care of him. He was now definitely engaged by the week as the Loraines' chauffeur. Colonel Loraine said that he had not exactly the manner of a chauffeur; but his wife reminded him that the young man came from Australia where manners were probably free and easy. She had evidently set her heart on keeping "Brown," and Colonel Loraine recognized that it was her turn to have a *protégé*. Very few women would have suffered his as good-humouredly as she did. Both the gardeners were reclaimed characters, and, like Dobbs, they were "ill" sometimes; but Colonel Loraine had ceased to call in the doctor for their little attacks. The doctor was a plain-spoken man, and the master of the house considered him a hard

one. He had rather expected him to say Roger was drunk. This diagnosis was much in vogue at Cæsar's Lodge. But Dr. Black did nothing of the kind. He took excellent care of Roger, and soon pulled him round. As yet Roger had given no hint of his true story either to the doctor or to the Loraines. The incredulity with which it had been received in Trevalla, and his disagreeable adventures there, had left their mark, and he was now inclined to keep his lips sealed. He still hoped that his false position would not last long.

On the Friday morning when Pamela was expected at Wimbledon, the Loraines were sitting at breakfast in a room facing their front garden. Beyond the garden lay Wimbledon Common, with the quiet of early morning and the haze of a summer day on its wide reaches. Mrs. Loraine had just reminded her husband that the motor ought to meet Pamela at King's Cross, and Colonel Loraine, who had finished his breakfast, and was feeding a large white Persian cat with fish, tried to reckon how long a chauffeur who did not know London would take to get there. In the end he sent for Roger.

"We want you to be at King's Cross at twelve o'clock," he said.

"To meet our niece, Miss Blois, who is coming to stay with us," said Mrs. Loraine.

Luckily the husband was engaged with his cat and the wife with her letters. They did not notice the quiver of surprise in Roger's face or the artificial calmness that followed it.

"Miss Blois!" he repeated, as if he wished to make sure of the name.

"Yes," said Colonel Loraine. "We know you can manage a motor on country roads, but we have not seen you in London. If you are nervous——"

"I am not nervous," said Roger.

He had considered the question of touching his cap to his employer, and addressing him as "sir," and he had decided to do neither. It was easier to keep to his own manners than to adopt a new code; and he was not actor enough to alter his voice, his move-

ments, and his speech, as he had seen men and women do on the stage to disguise their class. So Colonel Loraine was right in saying that as a chauffeur Brown was not quite correct.

"Twelve o'clock at King's Cross," said Colonel Loraine. "But how will you find the way?"

"By the map. Does Miss Blois know the car?"

"I telegraphed the number last night," said Mrs. Loraine.

Roger got out of the room as quickly as he could. His ideas were in a tumult. He did not know, of course, whether the Miss Blois expected was Miss Blois of Greymarsh; he did not know whether Mr. Gammage was representing him there, but that seemed likely. He felt so anxious and so easily able to ascertain the first point that a little later in the morning he went up to Mrs. Loraine in the garden and asked her from what station her niece would arrive.

"I may as well know," he said. "I may want to ask if the train is in."

"She comes from Greymarsh, near Eastwold," said Mrs. Loraine. "Colonel and Mrs. Blois will be coming next week, I hope, and we shall probably go down there in August. We generally do."

Roger walked up and down the room he had inherited from Dobbs and reviewed the situation. Then he looked in the glass and reviewed his clothes. He wondered their present state of squalid disrepair had not cost him his post. He had a mind to ask for an advance of wages and buy a ready-made suit. But a suit did not dress a man. He needed boots, he needed collars, he actually carried a handkerchief marked "P. Dobbs." He took down P. Dobbs's leather coat and put it on. His face was hidden by a mask and goggles, and in this guise he arrived at King's Cross, angry and dejected.

On his way he had called at his bank, and made no impression whatever. The junior clerk he saw showed him his signature cleverly counterfeited by Mr. Gammage, and raised his eyebrows derisively a

Roger's failure to reproduce it. He looked at Roger's seedy clothes, hardly hidden by the short, badly-fitting leather coat, and he suggested that if Roger thought it worth while to call again at all, it had better be some day when the manager was less busy. To-day it was impossible to trouble him. Roger said something of the likeness between his kinsman and himself, but the clerk had not seen Mr. Gammage. At this point his manner became distinctly uncivil, and Roger left the building because he did not want to be detained there by an interview with the police. He had just time to get to King's Cross by twelve.

As it happened, there was no other motor waiting there, so when Pamela, followed by a porter, came out of the station, she went straight up to Roger, and asked if he had been sent by Colonel Loraine. She looked with eager interest at the car, and showed no interest at all in him. She had an impression that he was tall and queerly dressed, and that the upper part of his face was hidden by a mask and most disfiguring goggles. She thought that he looked like a new breed of Guy Fawkes, and she wondered why he did not touch his cap and help with the luggage. So when Roger had admitted that he came from Mr. Loraine she took no further notice of him, but tipped the porters and got into the car. She had not brought her maid.

Meanwhile Roger was glad that he had effectually disguised himself. He saw that Pamela was like Mrs. Loraine, and probably like her mother. She had the little lady's delicate features, golden hair, and big grey eyes. She was not a dark Blois at all, but she had more energy of movement and expression than her aunt, and though her eyes were big, they were not soft or dreamy. For some time she did not speak. This new way of locomotion fascinated her, and it never occurred to her to feel afraid of it. She saw that Guy Fawkes had control of his monster, and that he steered through traffic skilfully. Roger tried to fix his whole attention on the road, and found that this did not save him from

a background of discomfort. He had not noticed when he put it on that Dobbs's coat was ravelled at the sleeve and wanting in buttons. But he had known since the morning that one of Mr. Gammage's shoes had come unsewn and showed a vile pink sock. He felt like a man in a nightmare who pays a visit and discovers in the midst of it that he is wearing pyjamas. The scarecrow things that covered him were not what he was used to call decent. But he had not known how intolerable they were till he sat beside Pamela. Her composure, her silence, began to vex him. If he had been a ghost he did not see she could not have treated him with less attention. Of course she was justified, but he began to wish the journey at an end. Then just when there was a little knot in the traffic that required his attention she spoke for the first time.

"Can you talk while you steer?" she asked.

"Sometimes," said Roger, manœuvring to avoid a newspaper boy on a bicycle.

"It depends on the road and the traffic," he added a moment later, when they were at a stand-still in a block.

Pamela glanced quickly at his profile, but she could see nothing except the tip of a straight nose and a strong clean-shaven chin. His voice and accent had startled her. A man who spoke like that was bred a gentleman, whatever he did for his living now. As she could see so little of his face she watched his hands and she liked the shapely length of them.

"I shall want to have a real quick spin on country roads," she said. "Of course we can from Wimbledon."

"Yes," said Roger.

"I suppose you know your way about by this time?"

"I only arrived at Wimbledon on Wednesday morning," said Roger, "and yesterday I was not out."

Pamela looked astonished.

"I thought you came about six weeks ago," she said. "Mrs. Loraine wrote——"

"She takes me for the reclaimed drunkard," thought Roger.

"I am not Dobbs," he said.

"Oh," said Pamela, "I thought you were."

The block now moved forward again, and here Roger, for the first time that day, made a little mistake. Instead of turning into Shaftesbury Avenue he kept along Oxford Street and in a short time found himself approaching Oxford Circus.

"What street is this?" he said to Pamela, who had no bump of locality, but knew her London shops.

"This is Oxford Street," she said, looking at Buzard's windows. "Have you lost your way? We can stop at the Circus and ask a policeman."

They arrived at the Circus as she spoke. Roger just managed to turn down Regent Street before the autocrat in office held up his hand.

"Why didn't you stop?" said Pamela.

"Did you want to?"

"I want to get to Wimbledon."

"You will get there."

"But you don't know the way. Can't you find a Putney omnibus, and keep behind it?"

Roger only smiled, and seeing a clear space before him, whizzed smoothly past a whole procession of omnibuses.

Pamela made up her mind that she disliked this man. Doubtless he was one of her uncle's "reformed" characters, a gentleman who had gone to the dogs and was being coaxed back to respectability. She was not a girl to weave sentiment into this idea, and feel a romantic interest in Roger on account of it. On the contrary. In the hardness of her youth she thought men who once went to the dogs returned there, and she wished to have nothing to do with them. She had observed the slight trembling in Roger's right hand, and she drew her own conclusions.

"I suppose you are used to motors, though you are new to London," she said, after a time. "Have you always lived in England?"

"I arrived in England on Whit-Monday," said Roger. "I am an Australian."

"How odd," said Pamela. "We have an Austra-

lian staying with us, and he arrived in England on Whit-Monday."

That was an interesting bit of information to Roger, but at the time he made no comment on it. They were now in the Fulham Road, about a mile from Putney Bridge. Pamela, however, did not recognize it.

"I'm quite sure we are wrong again," she said. "I've often stayed at Wimbledon, but I've never been here before."

"I'm surprised to hear that," said Roger, who did not believe it.

"Stop the car, please," said Pamela; "I'll get out and make inquiries."

"Sit still," said Roger, imperiously; for he had slowed down for a moment and the girl had half risen from her seat, while straight ahead he saw a stretch of empty road. He increased the pace as he spoke, and before Pamela could remonstrate she saw Putney Bridge and the reach of river known to her. But as they flew over it and up Putney Hill, she made up her mind again that the new chauffeur was odious, and as they flashed across Wimbledon Common she did not speak to him.

XXIV

AS the stable clock struck one they arrived at Cæsar's Lodge. Roger got down and offered his hand to Pamela, but she seemed not to see it. She ran past him into the arms of Mrs. Loraine, who was waiting in the porch. They disappeared into the house together, and Roger went in search of Colonel Loraine. He found him in a greenhouse meditating on a rose afflicted with green fly.

"I'm afraid Drummond is getting rather careless," he said with a sigh.

As Drummond was rarely sober Roger could not feel surprised; but it was not his business to say so. He had sought out his employer to ask for an advance of money, and the use of the car for two hours. He

wanted to go straight back to London and buy some respectable clothes.

"To be sure, to be sure," said Colonel Loraine, scanning Roger's raiment. "We ought to have thought of it. You came to us without luggage, didn't you? By the way, where are your things?"

"I hope to get hold of them again soon," said Roger.

After a little further discussion, Colonel Loraine offered to buy his chauffeur new leathers and to lend him five pounds for his immediate needs. Roger accepted the advance of money, but said he would rather not put Colonel Loraine to any expense until he felt sure of staying on. He took down the name and address of a well-known "ready-made" tailor, and he promised to be back in time to take the ladies out that afternoon. Colonel Loraine then toddled back to the house to welcome his niece. He found her sitting in the breakfast-room with his wife, but the luncheon gong sounded as they shook hands.

"You've come away in a great hurry," he began, as they sat down to table.

Pamela helped herself to a fish *soufflé*, and admitted that her journey had been sudden.

"Clothes?" suggested Mrs. Loraine.

"Oh, by the way," said Colonel Loraine, "you can't have the motor till Brown gets back. He has gone in again to buy clothes."

"He needs them," said Pamela. "Where did you pick him up, uncle? In an orchard?"

"On the top of a moor," said Mrs. Loraine. "Wait till you hear the whole story, Pam. You'll wonder who the dickens he is. I do."

Pamela responded politely, and then began to talk about the garden-party on Tuesday and the people she expected to meet there. She wanted to arrange a meeting with the Bradwardines, she said, mentioned Kitty's wedding, and then halted in confusion because she suddenly remembered that she would not be at Greymarsh for it unless she forgave her father or got him to forgive her.

"By the way," said Colonel Loraine, "I suppose your father and mother are coming on Monday?"

"I've no idea," said Pamela.

"Didn't they send a message?"

"I left before they were up."

The Loraines could not express the surprise they felt because the maids came into the room again just then. When they had removed meats and served sweets they departed.

"I've run away," said Pamela.

"My dear!" said Mrs. Loraine.

"I was so glad I had you to run to. It's respectable to run away to your only uncle and aunt, and I like being respectable. I suppose it comes of living in the country. In future I mean to live with you and help Uncle Henry with his pets, so I shan't be as respectable as I have been."

"Live with us!" gasped Mrs. Loraine.

"I wish you would!" said Colonel Loraine.

"But your father——" suggested Mrs. Loraine.

"Dad offended me," said Pamela. "I am not going back till he apologizes. So I shall never go back. You know Dad."

"I know you both," said the little lady.

"Are you going to take his part?" asked Pamela, in a mighty taking.

"Possibly," said Mrs. Loraine; and the twinkle in her eyes had the effect of a dash of water on Pamela's little bubble of rage.

"You won't when you see the Australian," she said.

"What has he to do with it?" asked Colonel Loraine; and then wondered why the two women laughed at the slow-moving mind of man.

"I'll ask him to come with them on Monday," said Mrs. Loraine.

"Then I shall have to run away from here," said Pamela; but after a little argument she admitted that the plan had something in it. She would not have said so for the world, but she was really uneasy

about her father's next move. Suppose he followed her, and insisted on her going back with him.

"I should have the courage to oppose him," she said, putting the case to her uncle and aunt as they sat in the garden after lunch.

"I should not," said Mrs. Loraine. "I always knock under to a big man. That's why I married a little one."

"Your father is not easy to oppose," said Colonel Loraine.

"What does Mrs. Blois think of this young man?" asked Mrs. Loraine.

"Just what I do; but she is afraid to say so."

This sounded so like Mrs. Blois that Mrs. Loraine could not help smiling. Then the conference came to an end, and Pamela was left to her own devices because, as her uncle and aunt explained, she had come before she was wanted, and they had engagements they could not miss. Colonel Loraine reminded her that the car would be at her disposal when it came back. Pamela said she thought she would rather hang about the garden. . . . But it was not a large garden, and it was a brilliant afternoon. At first she sat in the shade and looked at the illustrated papers. Then she walked up and down the paths and compared the badly tended flower borders with the trimly kept ones at Greymarsh. Then she went into the house and found that her aunt's maid had unpacked and put away her clothes. She hardly knew what to do next, but from her bedroom window the common looked inviting. As she put on her hat for a stroll there, the parlour-maid arrived with a message from the chauffeur. He wished to know whether Miss Blois would go out that afternoon.

"Yes, I will," said Pamela; and she went downstairs at once, with a long gauze veil lent her by Mrs. Loraine tied correctly over her hat, and a long white dust-coat over her arm.

The motor was waiting at the front door. The chauffeur still wore his mask, but otherwise it seemed to Pamela that everything he had on was new. He no

longer looked as if he had been picked up in an orchard, she thought, and she wished he would take off his goggles.

"Can we get right into the country?" she asked as they started.

"We can get to Farnham and be back by seven, if that will do," said Roger.

Pamela had heard his story as far as it was known to the Loraines, and now as she sat beside him she tried to fill it out. He was of her own caste. That he had made plain this morning directly he opened his mouth—even before, indeed. The differences between him and the Australian, for example, were quite unmistakable, though they were difficult to seize and express in the clumsy medium of words. This man reminded her of the other in build and complexion. He even had the same contour of jaw, and neck and chin and the same shaped head. But he never dropped his jaw as the Australian often did, he had the hands of a well-bred man and the easy composure of manner. She was still prepared to dislike him, but she hoped he was not going to insist on a dogged silence. Under the circumstances she considered that it was her prerogative to set the terms of her intercourse while they were out together, and as she was interested she was inclined for conversation.

"I can't think how you know your way?" she began.

"I look at a map before I start."

"But how can you remember?"

"I bring one with me in case I forget."

"It looks very easy," said Pamela. "I think I'll try it myself when we come to a clear road."

"Not to-day," said Roger.

"Why not?"

"I should like to have Colonel Loraine's consent first. And it is Saturday afternoon—we shan't find clear roads."

"I suppose," said Pamela, "that you are new to motors, and rather nervous."

"Perhaps," said Roger.

"But you get along very well—even in traffic. Have you ever had an accident?"

"Little ones—nothing serious."

"Dogs, I suppose—not people?"

"I'm rather fond of dogs," said Roger, curtly; and Pamela had the grace to feel ashamed of herself, and to lead the conversation round to the points of her Bedlington pup.

They got to Wisley at five o'clock, and as they approached the Hut, Pamela remembered that she had come away without tea. The afternoon sun was on the pine woods—the water looked cool and inviting.

"Stop, please," she said to Roger. "I think we'll get out here and have tea."

"Then we shall not get to Farnham," he said.

"I don't care," said the girl. "I'm dizzy and thirsty. I've never been in a motor before, and we've come so quick. Besides, I'm sure you must be tired. You've been out all day."

Roger did not know how to refuse, and he did not wish to consent. He thought that the Loraines might consider Pamela too young and pretty to sit by herself in the crowded garden of an inn, and he could not offer to sit with her. If he did sit with her, he would have to take off his mask. That moment must come, of course. He could not hope to hide from her throughout her visit, though he would very much rather have done so while he was acting as her uncle's chauffeur. When he was Roger Blois again the Loraines would know him, so his sojourn with them could not be hidden. But then he would be in a position to treat his present adventure as an amusing one. He rapidly made up his mind not to disclose himself yet, even if he had to unmask. He had learned to dread the incredulity with which his story was received. He felt more troubled than amused as he stopped the car in front of the Hut, and watched Pamela get down. She hesitated, looked at the people standing about near the inn, and made up her mind.

"Can you leave the car?" she said to Roger.

"Is it necessary?"

"If we are to have tea in the garden it is," said she.

Roger stood up and took off his new dust-coat. Beneath it he now appeared in a quiet, dark tweed suit, that fitted him better than he had supposed ready-made clothes could. Then he took off his goggles. Pamela had her back turned to him as he did so. He had descended from the car when she faced him again, and stood in petrified surprise, her eyes wide and angry, the words she had been about to say frozen on her lips. Her first thought was that the Australian had somehow stolen a march on her, and taken advantage of it.

"You!" she said. "You!"

Roger saw bewilderment struggle with aversion as her glance fell on his hands, and then darted back again to his face.

"Who are you?" she said.

"Why do you ask?" said Roger.

"Because that man at home—the Australian I told you of, is the image of you—he is you—and yet he is not. His hands are different, and his speech, and his manner; yet the resemblance is amazing. It is like a nightmare."

"What does your Australian call himself?"

"Roger Blois. He is some connection of ours. His father or grandfather was a cousin. But you are a Blois—to look at—and you say you come from Australia. Have you kinsmen over here?"

"Yes, I have," said Roger.

Pamela wanted to ask other questions, but Roger's manner gave her the impression that he would not want to answer them. The startling likeness between the two men did not blind her to the far more weighty and interesting fact of their wide divergence. She could see that this man in his anger had almost forgotten her; had quite forgotten his official position. He led the way to the garden, chose a table, and ordered tea before he spoke again. She sat down, where he placed a chair for her, and looked at him.

"It is just as if you were an actor and played two parts," she said suddenly. "At least it would be if it were not for your hands . . . and . . . other things."

She had stared too much, she felt suddenly, as her eyes met Roger's. After all, the resemblance was as superficial as that between a diamond brooch and its five-shilling imitation. She compared Roger's glance with his prototype's dull stare, and Roger's fine mouth with the loose lips of the Australian.

"Shall I tell them at home?" she said.

"I beg you not to," said Roger. "I have to put my hands on that young man, and if you warn him——"

"Then you know him?"

"Yes. I know him."

"You don't think well of him?"

Pamela's glance was eager, and told more of her mind than she knew.

"You will have done with him in a couple of days," said Roger. "I must go and see your father and a Mrs. Bradwardine, who lives——"

"You know Mrs. Bradwardine?"

"Yes. Has she seen anything of your Australian?"

"Not much. It is rather odd. She wrote from Rockmouth to say that he was quite charming. None of us understand why she said so; and now she seems to think him as impossible as we do. In fact, she suggests that there is something wrong about him."

"So there is," said Roger, bluntly.

Pamela could have clapped her hands.

"Then I shan't have to marry him!" she cried out impulsively.

"Marry him! You! He has dared . . ."

His anger both pleased and frightened Pamela, but she hung her head at the thought of her indiscretion.

"My father . . ." she stammered. "It is a question of property."

"Oh!" said Roger, and he smiled at the girl.

"They are coming up next week," Pamela went on hurriedly, for she felt very red and uncomfortable. "Mrs. Bradwardine comes on Monday, and my father and mother and Mr. Blois either on Monday or Tuesday."

"Is that certain?" asked Roger.

Pamela seemed to think it was. Then tea came, and she poured it out and they talked of other things. When they had finished, Roger went into the inn to pay, and Pamela waited for him near the car. She watched him when he came out of the door and walked briskly towards her. He was not taller than the man at Grey-marsh, but he moved differently. Yet at a little distance the resemblance was close enough to give her a recurring sense of shock. As she had said, she could imagine that she knew one man who deftly played two parts. But she had seen Roger's eyes blaze with an anger before which her own little spurts of temper would break, she felt, like bubbles in a gale; and she had seen them dwell on her with a friendliness that set her dreaming. Her preoccupation with him was justifiable, she assured herself, directly it disturbed her. Why did he say he must see her father and Mrs. Bradwardine? What did he want of them and of the Australian? Why was he acting as a paid chauffeur?

As she watched him she saw him stopped by a middle-aged bearded man, who looked like a sailor. They talked earnestly together for a minute, then shook hands and separated. Roger took a note-book from his pocket, and made an entry before he came on to the car; and he helped her in, and started without speaking. But after a silence she knew to be absorbed, he said, as they were nearing Esher—

"Have you received a small kangaroo at Grey-marsh lately?"

"Yes," said Pamela; "Mr. Blois got him for me, because the other died."

"What other?"

"The one on the *Electric*—the one he told us he was bringing."

"The only kangaroo on the *Electric* is now at Grey-marsh," said Roger. "It belonged to the sailor you just saw, and was bought for you before the ship left. The sailor looked after it on the voyage, and took it up to London with him. He was to send it from there

because the journey was shorter than from Rockmouth."

"Then Mr. Blois has said what is not true," said Pamela, after a little pause. "But did the sailor mistake you for him? Is that why he spoke to you?"

"The sailor knew me well enough," said Roger, evasively. "I saw him nearly every day on the *Electric*."

"Did you see the little kangaroo, too?"

"Rather. It was as tame as a kitten."

"Do you think it would know you again?"

"I think it might."

"It didn't know Mr. Blois."

"I'm not surprised at that," said Roger.

"I wish you'd come to Greymarsh and catch it," said Pamela.

"I promise you I'll try," he replied.

XXV

WHILE Pamela was at dinner with her uncle and aunt, Roger went out for a stroll on the common. He soon came to a bench in a quiet part of it, and he sat down there to smoke. He had to make up his mind whether he should put off his settlement with Mr. Gammage three days longer, and then act for himself, or whether it would be better to communicate with the London police to-morrow. He thought the police would probably raise official difficulties and lose more than three days in the end; and he did not want to be Robert Brown an hour longer than he need. Mr. Gammage's torn shoes and the frayed edges of his pink shirt were trifles, but they rankled in Roger's memory. The arrival of Pamela had made the whole situation insufferable. Besides, he thought it would be more satisfactory to deal with his kinsman himself than to see him in the slow and formal hands of the law.

He had lighted his pipe and was revolving these matters in his mind, when he heard a girl's voice say just behind him that she felt tired, and would like a rest before going home. A man's voice answered in

jocular Cockney that seats were cheap to-day, and she might as well have what she wanted. Roger went on smoking, and did not look at the two people, who now came close to him. But they started when they saw him, looked at each other, looked hard at him, and showed every symptom of extreme agitation and surprise. At last the girl who had attracted his attention by her manner spoke to him.

"Bert!" she said, not unkindly.

"Ole chap," said the young man.

"My name is not Bert," said Roger, but he looked at the two young people attentively.

"Poor old chap," said the man. "Don't you know us?"

"I'm afraid I don't," said Roger.

"Julia thought you might come back to your old haunts," said the girl. "She wrote to warn us."

"To warn you?"

"She said you'd pretend not to know us if we met, but that you wouldn't do any one any harm unless they interfered with you. Perhaps you'd like to see her letter?"

"I should."

"You know Julia right enough, then?"

"Oh yes," said Roger, with a sigh, "I know Julia. She lives at Trevalla, near Rockmouth."

"It's the same Julia," cried the girl. "That proves it, I'm sure. Don't you agree with me, Jim?"

"Don't I always agree with you?" said Jim.

"Why don't you know us if you know Julia?" said the girl, turning to Roger.

"I suppose it's because I've never seen you before," said Roger, in a tone of polite apology. "But I think I can guess——"

"E doesn't talk a bit like Bert," interrupted Mr. Salter.

"Just what struck me," said the girl. "But Bert was a first-rate mimic. Sometimes when father called him a duke he'd talk like one till we all screamed."

"I'm not mimicking anyone," said Roger, rather wearily.

"Mr. Salter has your room now," said the girl. "We've put up fresh curtains. You remember those old Turkey red ones, you burnt a hole in—well, when it came to spring cleaning them——"

"I never saw the curtains," said Roger. "I was never in the room."

"Rats!" said Mr. Salter.

"Just so," said the girl. "You're Bert all right, and I want a word with you. Jim, would you mind walking as far at that tree over there and walking slowly?"

"Well, I don't know, Florrie," began Mr. Salter, but a look from Florrie left him no choice. She was not a young lady who would stand any nonsense.

"You may have observed," she said, as soon as her admirer was out of hearing, "you may have observed that I now call that gentleman Jim."

"I heard you," admitted Roger.

"We're engaged."

"My congratulations to Mr. Jim."

"Mr. Salter is his name, as you know, and none better. I'm telling you about it because I want you to understand that I bear you and Julia no malice. At the same time I must say you treated me badly. After borrowing a pound to get there, too."

"It certainly sounds inglorious," said Roger.

"When I received Julia's letter saying you were not drowned after all, and were engaged to her, I was too riled to care what happened to you. I said to mother, 'Let him be ill. It'll do him good.' I did really."

"Why were you riled?" asked Roger. "Was I by any chance engaged to you too?"

"There was no excuse," continued the girl. "You must have been playin' about with Julia before the rocks knocked you dotty."

"But after all," urged Roger, "if I liked Julia and if Julia liked me——"

"You'd no right to like any one . . . but me."

"Is that so?" said Roger.

"You would never so much as have seen Julia if I hadn't lent you the money."

"Well," said Roger, knocking out his pipe, "I must say I don't seem to have been worth having. I'm glad you haven't fretted for me."

"I did fret . . . at first," said Florrie; "I'm not going to any more though. Jim's worth a dozen of you if his nose is no particular shape."

All this time the girl had sat in one corner of the bench, her face turned towards Roger, her eyes examining his handsome profile. But it was with a sudden start of recognition and excitement that she now leaned forward and pointed to a tobacco-pouch Roger had just taken from his pocket.

"That is Bert's pouch," she cried to Mr. Salter, now returning from his tree. "Those are not Bert's hands. Where is Bert?"

"Steady on," said Jim.

"I've a good mind to call a policeman," said Florrie. "How do we know Bert isn't murdered?"

"Are you talking about a man called Herbert Gammage, who was at Trevalla on Whit-Monday?" said Roger.

"That's him," said Mr. Salter.

Roger was now slowly refilling his pipe from the embroidered pouch he had found in his kinsman's old coat. He cast about for the shortest way of telling his story.

"I was at Trevalla, too, on Whit-Monday," he said. "I went for a swim and left my clothes on the beach. Mr. Gammage got into them, and has passed himself off for me ever since. We had met, so he knew of the likeness between us."

"Crikey!" said Mr. Salter.

"Do you mean to tell me Julia was in the house with you for days and never spotted you weren't Bert?" cried Florrie. "She must be thick. I certainly made the mistake at first—I might make it again—when you look away like that—just your profile and your colour and your shoulders—it might take in any one. But where is Bert? You haven't told us that yet."

"I thought you had a letter to read to me," suggested Roger.

"I have," said Florrie, taking a letter from her pocket. "I couldn't make head or tail of it before, but perhaps now——"

" 'DEAR COUSIN FLORRIE ' (she began)——

" 'Poor Bert has left us. I don't mean that he be dead, but Dr. Spott wanted to lock him up because he says he's some one else. So I helped him jump out of the window, and gave him my pig. There isn't any harm in him really, only he fought Dr. Spott, and so he is raging. I don't know now whether we'm to be married, because I wish to marry Bert, and he says he is not Bert. I should like to be quite sure before it came to marriage. If you see him tell him Dr. Spott swore awful when he found me in the room, and when that drunken chap came back in Farmer Smith's dog-cart, all the men cussed and quarrelled so that us never had such goings on. Dr. Spott went off to Rockmouth to find the police and send them after Bert, but he were too late. He and faither have fallen out over his bill, and if quite convenient I should like to visit you now instead of before, because I be very unhappy, and I think Bert will go to your house one of these days.' "

"Bert seems to be wandering about with a tame pig?" said Mr. Salter. "But it wasn't Bert—it was you—I'm getting mixed."

Roger explained those points in Julia's letter that were still obscure. He heard that she was expected at Barnes on Monday, and he refused politely but decisively to give Bert's present address.

"I can't afford to let him take fright and make off," he said. "I want him."

"The question is," said Mr. Salter, "what do you want him for?"

"Isn't that obvious?"

"In a way it is. If Bert has collared your name

and your oof, and generally played the goat all this time, of course he'll have to climb down and be Mr. 'Erbert Gammage again, and eat dirt in old Angelo's office, if old Angelo will let him. But it's plain to me, knowing Bert as I do, that he thought you were drowned. He was a bit easy, but he wasn't a bad chap, and when he stepped into your shoes his own were pinching him. See ? "

" I can't say I do. Why didn't he find out whether I was dead or alive ? "

" How could he without giving himself away ? " said Florrie. " Why should Mr. Roger Blois inquire after the 'ealth of Mr. Gammage ? No doubt he had to mind his p's and q's. You can't ever say again, Jim, that Bert isn't clever."

" He's so clever that he'll probably find himself in gaol before long," said Roger, grimly ; " he has forged my signature at the bank."

Florrie turned a little paler, rose to her feet, and signed to Mr. Salter to follow her lead.

" Good evening," she said. " I hope you won't be hard on Bert."

" Will you give me your address ? " said Roger.

" No thank you," said Florrie ; " we've no wish to meddle."

" But you want justice done."

" We're not particular," said Mr. Salter.

" Yes we are, Jim," cried Florrie. " I'm surprised at you. But if you ask me, I can't see as Bert is so much to blame as all that. Anyhow he's our friend, and you can find some one else to help you send him to prison."

" No doubt he's done wrong," said Mr. Salter, uneasily. " but why should we give him a kick ? "

" Very well," said Roger, getting up too, " I have no doubt I shall be able to settle Mr. Gammage without your help."

" Just so," said Mr. Salter, and politely lifted his hat as he went away.

Meanwhile the evening post had brought letters

from Greymarsh to Mrs. Loraine and Pamela. Mrs. Blois had written a long rambling letter to Pamela in which her clothes, her father, the Australian, and the kangaroo were so entangled that the girl's rippling laugh as she read it attracted her aunt's attention.

"I have several things to tell you about the kangaroo," Pamela read aloud. "To begin with I think for the garden-party you should get a new hat, and I find he has no objection. Did you know that he could jump a high fence? He is quite well but eats things in the kitchen garden, and your father does not like it. Mr. Blois found him on the croquet-lawn yesterday, and fell over a hoop but did not catch him. He will arrive early on Tuesday, and so will George and Martha; but we must come by a later train, because there is a meeting about gas, and your father says it is wicked to put gas before drains. He is very angry with you, and I am writing to your aunt to ask if we may bring Mr. Blois on Tuesday. At least he will travel earlier, as I have said already. Of course he is on your father's hands all day, and he naturally finds it trying. Unfortunately I'm no companion for a young man. I did ask him to hold some wool for me yesterday, but he said his mother always used two chairs. He might have guessed that I only wanted to relieve your father, but he has not very fine perceptions, although I still think it is a child's duty to consult her father's wishes, especially when she is a girl. I hope it will all be settled while we are at Wimbledon, and that you will come back with us. I can't get on with that scarlet shawl till you pick up the stitches."

"Some one will arrive early on Tuesday," said Pamela, as she finished her step-mother's letter. "But is it Mr. Blois, or is it the kangaroo?"

Mrs. Loraine had laughed a little as she listened, but she looked gravely at her own letter which was from Colonel Blois.

"Your father writes clearly enough," she said to Pamela. "He expects you to obey his wishes."

"I will when his wishes are reasonable," said the girl.

"What is it all about?" said Colonel Loraine, waking up from his evening paper.

"Dad wants me to marry a skunk," said Pamela, putting her case in a nutshell.

"Why?"

"Because he is the heir of Greymarsh."

"H'm! what exactly do you mean by a skunk, my dear?"

"You'll know on Tuesday," said Pamela. "He arrives by an early train."

XXVI

THE greenhouses at Caesar's Lodge were some way from the house, and Colonel Loraine took most of the mild exercise allowed him in walking backwards and forwards between his books and his plants. On Monday morning, the day before Pamela's parents were expected at Wimbledon, Roger had gone to the house to see if the motor would be required that day, and had been told that Colonel and Mrs. Loraine were both "somewhere in the garden." A little search showed him Mrs. Loraine and Pamela engaged with two kittens and a ball on the lawn. They made such an alluring picture that he paused to look at it. The girl darted here and there as swiftly as the kittens, and her laugh was as merry as their movements. Directly she saw Roger, however, she stopped, and, while he spoke to Mrs. Loraine, she walked a little away, but not quite out of hearing. She was startled every time she met Roger, first by his troubling resemblance to the Australian, and a moment later by the points of unlikeness. The very way he stood marked the difference, so did the set of his shoulders and his glance. The other had no glance, she said to herself, nothing but a fatuous stare.

"Pamela!" said her aunt, in some surprise.

And the girl became conscious that she was expected to answer a question she had not heard. She coloured

and apologized and thought she would like to go out to-day, if her aunt went too.

"I can go this afternoon," said Mrs. Loraine, and the motor was ordered for three.

Roger walked slowly towards the motor-house, where he had a little work to do. It was the cleaning that he found strange and irksome, because, of course, he had never had that on his hands before. Luckily he had watched it being done when he first possessed a motor of his own and could not keep away from it. He had finished for the morning and shut the door behind him, when he heard unusual sounds proceeding from the nearest greenhouse, where he supposed Colonel Loraine to be alone. His first idea was that one or both of the gardeners must be "ill" and molesting their master. But then he remembered that the head-man had gone to London that day, and that the underling had just passed him on his way to the front. So he hurried on, and directly he opened the greenhouse door he knew that he had done well to come. Colonel Loraine faced him, and the poor gentleman was in a state of trembling distress and agitation, blue about the lips and leaning against the greenhouse stage for support. Opposite him stood a thick-set, poorly-clothed man, whose face Roger could not see. But when the door opened the stranger turned with a scowl, and Roger recognized Dobbs, the drunken chauffeur.

"We don't want you," the man said truculently.

He was not as drunk as he had been on the moor, but he was not sober. Roger pushed past him unceremoniously and stood by Colonel Loraine.

"Let me help you back to the house," he said.

Colonel Loraine shook his head and tried to get something out of an inside pocket in his coat. Roger went to his assistance, and found a small bottle of medicine and a flat glass in a leather case. He guessed that the bottle held an emergency draught, and he uncorked it quickly. When Colonel Loraine had swallowed it he tried to speak, but Roger could only hear something about a month's wages.

"Damn a month's wages," said Dobbs. "You show me the sneak what's got my berth, that's all I ask. I'm an honest working man, and I'll settle 'im—s'welp me I will—and what's more, I'm comin' back 'ere—as your shover."

Roger now stood with his back to the wall so that he could see both Colonel Loraine and Dobbs. The man shook his fist at his old employer and even lurched towards him, but whenever he advanced Roger put out his arm and one foot to ward him off. He saw, however, that the brutal ill will of the man's behaviour was as injurious to Colonel Loraine as a personal assault would have been to a man in better health; and the spectacle of the frail, kindly gentleman besieged and insulted by the ruffian he had tried to befriend stirred Roger to a heat of anger that soon ended the argument.

"You have nothing more to say to him?" he asked Colonel Loraine.

"Not just now—he might call again—when he is sober."

The colonel stopped speaking because his breath came in painful gasps. Dobbs, hearing his sobriety impugned, made a wild rush forward. Roger got hold of him by the collar and, with some difficulty, pushed him out of the greenhouse. He was not as thick-set as Dobbs, but he was taller and more muscular, and he urged him successfully along the garden path that led to the back gate. Roger's progress, however, was slow, and to the eye, undignified, especially when Dobbs, cursing volubly, wrenched his collar suddenly from his captor's hands, and lay down flat on the gravel. After a prolonged tussle Roger got him to his feet again, but as they rose together, locked in each other's arms, hot, angry, and dusty, he was not pleased to see Mrs. Loraine and Pamela looking on in amazement.

"What's the matter?" cried Mrs. Loraine. "Why, it's Dobbs!"

Then both ladies fled, because Dobbs began to talk again. They heard Roger shout something after

them, but they did not understand what he said, and they sat down together on the lawn.

"He must be very strong to manage Dobbs," said Mrs. Loraine.

Pamela listened, waited, watched. Presently she sprang to her feet. Through the shrubs beyond the lawn she had caught sight of Roger carrying the inert figure of her uncle. As she fled towards them she remembered Roger's cry of warning, and reproached herself.

"He has fainted," said Roger; and by that time Mrs. Loraine had followed her niece and saw her husband in Roger's arms.

A little later Pamela came out into the garden again. She sat in a shady corner, and watched the kittens; but her mind was full of Roger and of her uncle. She did not know yet what had happened, but her thoughts went back to the story her aunt had told her of their meeting with the new chauffeur on Trevalla Moor. Presently, when she saw Roger walking slowly towards the motor-house she intercepted him.

"Will Dobbs come back?" she said.

"I hope not," said Roger.

"What happened in the greenhouse?"

"Nothing much."

"Then why did you throw him out of the garden?"

"Because he wouldn't go any other way," said Roger, composedly.

By lunch-time the doctor had come and gone. He did not take a serious view of Colonel Loraine's condition, but said that he would want careful nursing and attention for twenty-four hours. Pamela suggested that her parents and Mr. Blois should be put off, and that she should give up the garden-party to-morrow. But Mrs. Loraine considered these proposals and rejected them.

"If your uncle is worse to-morrow we can telegraph early," she said. "I expect him to be much better and able to see your father. I can't go with you to the garden-party, but you will find the Bradwardines there."

"I should like to call for them," said Pamela, after a moment's reflection; "I don't want to make my appearance with Mr. Blois."

"Do you care to have the motor this afternoon?" said Mrs. Loraine, preparing to go back to her husband.

"Shall we give it a rest?" said Pamela.

"Just as you like," replied Mrs. Loraine, and left it so.

She was too much distracted by anxiety for her husband to dwell on a doubt that just crossed her mind—a doubt as to the propriety of leaving Pamela to the companionship of the handsome, unexplained chauffeur. The doubt recurred, however, at two o'clock, when she heard the motor vibrating beneath her bedroom windows. Pamela had apparently changed her mind, and her aunt decided, as she watched her niece start, that a carriage should take her to the garden party to-morrow.

"Is it to be London or the country?" said Roger.

"London first, and then the country. We have five hours."

Roger looked politely dejected.

"Hardly three hours," he said.

"Why?"

"I want to be about here again when the gardeners leave off work, in case Dobbs——"

"I'll tell them to stay on duty till you come back."

"I'm afraid they are not to be trusted," said Roger. "I want to be back myself."

"No doubt you are right," said Pamela, with a chilling air of approval; but she could not discover that her companion felt chilled. His profile suggested amusement. She was vexed with herself for having made an advance that he refused, and she knew that it would be most unreasonable to feel vexed with him. Yet she felt out of humour, and it seemed to her that he must know it, and he took no pains to console her. By the time they reached the top of Putney Hill she had decided that her first impression was the true one, and that he was odious.

"You can go quicker now," she said, in a tone of amiable command she might have used to a groom in a dog-cart. "I'm not afraid."

Roger's immediate and involuntary reply was to come to a dead stop. A child on a fidgety pony was trying to pass them, and he saw that the child was afraid and incompetent. He got down, caught the pony's reins, and led it safely into a side street.

"That pony will break that child's neck," he said to Pamela, as he clambered into his seat.

"Do you know anything about horses?" she asked airily.

"Yes," he said.

"Can you ride?"

"Yes."

"Drive?"

"Yes."

She suspected that his sedateness and his monosyllables were ironical, and she resented it.

"What were you in Australia?" she asked bluntly.

If it was rude she would be rude, for he gave himself airs. They had arrived now at the Upper Richmond Road, and Roger was steering carefully through the cross currents of traffic there. When they began to descend Putney High Street their way was clear for a time, but as they were about to cross the bridge they met a string of carriages, cabs, and motors coming to a polo-match at Ranelagh. They were held up, and at Pamela's request Roger asked a policeman what was going on.

"I've never seen polo, have you?" she said.

"Yes," said Roger, absently; "I play."

"Of course," said Pamela, "I can see that you are not a real chauffeur."

"Do I drive so badly?"

"I dare say. I was never in a motor till last Friday, so I'm no judge. But a real chauffeur would be more civil."

"This is serious," said Roger.

"You don't even answer my questions. I asked you what you were in Australia."

"I'm very sorry. I had forgotten you asked, and

it isn't easy to answer. When I left Harvard I went home for a bit. Then I went to South Africa. Soon after I got back my father died, and I've been busy ever since winding up his affairs."

"I suppose you went to South Africa to amuse yourself?"

"Yes."

"You saw no fighting then?"

"I saw a good deal."

"Do you mean that you were in it?"

"Yes," said Roger.

The car went forward now with other traffic, and Pamela did not speak again till they found themselves in another block at the end of the Fulham Road.

"Are you going to be a chauffeur all your life?" she asked.

"I hope not," said Roger.

"What will you take to instead?"

"What would you advise?"

"Oh, if you are going to laugh at me——"

"When you are trying to be kind——"

In crowded places conversation with the man at the wheel is necessarily broken, and the exigencies of Sloane Street and Knightsbridge were excuse enough for the silence that ensued. Pamela got out at Woollands without speaking again.

"Where to, now?" said Roger, when she came back. He knew he had angered the girl, and he wanted to make his peace. But the piquant contrast of her dove-like beauty and quick flame of her temper tempted him to tease her, coax her, and, in fact, make love to her whenever they met. He had no scruple about it, since he knew from her own ingenuous confession that her father actually desired the match.

"I want to go to a hat shop in Sloane Street," said Pamela. "I may be there some time. I can't buy an ugly hat because you happen to be in a hurry. I think, perhaps, you had better go home, and I will come later by train."

Roger made no reply to this proposal, and when she came out of the shop, followed by an assistant

with a large parcel, he was waiting for her. She had not been twenty minutes.

"I am going to ask my aunt to let me have a carriage to the garden-party to-morrow," she said, "we shall be four."

"But your uncle and aunt——"

"I am not thinking of them. Mr. Blois is coming by an early train. He will be with me. And I am going to call for Mrs. Bradwardine and Kitty. They are staying at the Court Hotel."

"Will they come out to Wimbledon?" asked Roger.

"I should think not—they are only up for a few days, and very busy. Do you want to see them?"

"I want to see Mrs. Bradwardine," said Roger. "But I shall manage that."

"How?"

"I am not quite sure yet. I may be at the garden-party."

Pamela was nearly, but not quite, startled into asking him how he would get there. Her silence was sufficiently expressive of surprise, but it did not require an answer, and as they sped back to Wimbledon, Roger began to talk about dogs again, a subject she always rose to readily.

XXVII

MRS. LORAINÉ had neither eyes nor ears for any one but her husband while he lay ill. She came down for a few minutes at a time to eat and drink in a hurry, and to arrange for Pamela's amusement. At breakfast on Tuesday she told her niece that a carriage would come at three to take her to the garden-party, and that Mrs. Blois had written from Greymarsh to request that the motor should not meet them, as nothing, not even the commands of the colonel, would induce her to enter it. Pamela laughed.

"I wonder if a motor-car would make mother stand up for herself," she said. "What fun it would be!"

"What are you going to say to your father?" asked Mrs. Lorainé.

"That depends entirely on what he says to me. You have to remember, Aunt Irene, that he boxed my ears."

"My dear child, this is the first I hear of it."

"You would never have heard of it from me if mother had not been coming. I consider it a disgraceful episode, that for poor dad's sake should be buried. But mother will probably tell you all about it on the doorstep."

"You must have been very exasperating," said Mrs. Loraine.

"When you see Mr. Blois, you'll take my part."

Mrs. Loraine went back to her husband without prolonging the discussion; and Pamela, looking out of the window, reflected that the long empty hours of a brilliant summer morning lay before her. In the garden she met Roger, who asked her if she felt inclined for a spin.

"I am at your service," he said. "Mrs. Loraine has sent word that I can have the day off if I wish."

"Have you nothing of your own to do, then?"

"Not till this afternoon. I am at your service now."

"Let us start directly," cried Pamela, "and get as far as we can."

They got to the woods at Oxshott, and halted there in the shade. Pamela did not ask herself where these days were taking her. She drifted swiftly and gladly into love's paradise, and was happy there—so happy that she forgot the world outside. If she had faced the future it must have threatened separation; but at this stage realities were as far off as the skies, and seen, like the skies, through an enchanted haze. The present hour gave her increasing and sustaining belief in Roger and in his devotion to herself, for he did not hide his hand. He restrained it, inasmuch as he did not declare himself this morning in plain English. But every son of Adam has more languages than one at his command. To-day, for certain, Pamela knew herself beloved; and it was with a tumult in her heart rendering joy and pain indistinguishable that she made the great discovery. What answer it roused she hardly understood yet. Only yesterday she had mistaken love for hate, it seemed; and even yet she could have wished

herself free of an enchantment touched with pain. The glamour and surprise of it were absorbing. Roger's voice cast a spell, his touch set her cheeks aflame. She was troubled by the commotion of spirit his presence caused. The quiet forest broke down barriers; as they sped home they hardly spoke to each other, and yet there was exquisite understanding between them. When they did speak their voices betrayed them, and so did their eyes when they looked at each other. Pamela dreaded the afternoon.

"I wish you were coming to the garden-party," she said.

"I suppose you will have some one very like me with you?"

"Not in the least like," cried the girl.

"What time do you start?"

"At three."

When they got back to Wimbledon they found that George and Martha—the two servants from Greymarsh—had arrived, but not the Australian. After waiting some time, Mrs. Loraine and Pamela had lunch served, and when they got up he had still not come. The servants said he had left them at King's Cross, as he wanted to do some shopping.

"He is having his hair curled," said Pamela; and persuaded her aunt not to wait for him.

She went into the garden directly Mrs. Loraine went upstairs, but she did not find Roger there. It was nearly half-past two when she heard wheels at the front door, and found that Mr. Gammage had arrived, and was disputing the fare with the cabman. He wore a horsey-looking checked suit that he had chosen himself, a brown bowler hat, and red dog-skin gloves.

"I hope I see you well," he said affably to Pamela. "Can you tell me what the fare is from Wimbledon? I'm sure half a crown is a swindle."

"You're very late," said Pamela, when she had assured him she knew nothing of fares, and watched him part protestingly with half a crown. "My aunt expected you to lunch. Are you going to the Skeffington-Blewitts?"

"Rather," said Mr. Gammage. "I've come all the way from Greymarsh for nothing else but to go there and to see you, if I may put it in that way. I hope lunch isn't off, though. Sorry I'm late."

The uneasy familiarity of his manner struck Pamela even more disagreeably than it had ever done before, and so did the pervasive intangible commonness of his appearance. She led the way into the dining-room and glanced at the table.

"There's everything you want, I think," she said. "Will you help yourself? I'm going to dress."

"I'm more thirsty than 'ungry," said Mr. Gammage. "Soder and whisky will go to the right place, I can tell you. Now we won't be long."

He took out a pink silk handkerchief, panted, mopped his face, and sat down at the well-spread table. There were inviting dishes on it, he saw at a glance, cold pressed beef, lobster salad, strawberries in jelly, fresh small rolls. He began to think that perhaps he was hungry as well as thirsty, in spite of the hot weather. He hardly noticed that Pamela had slipped out of the room.

As she crossed the hall she was surprised to see Roger come in at the front door.

"I heard some one arrive," he said. "Who was it?"

"Mr. Blois."

"Where is he?"

"In the dining-room—at lunch. Do you want to see him?"

"Presently. I'll wait here."

Pamela who hardly had time to dress, ran upstairs. Roger heard her reach her room and shut the door. Then he went upstairs too. It was not a large house, and since Colonel Loraine had been ill he had learned to know the lie of the first floor, where there were two large bedrooms, with dressing-rooms attached, and two smaller rooms. One of the small rooms had a window overlooking the back garden, and he had seen Pamela at it yesterday; so he opened the door of the other. A hasty glance showed him his own trunk, his own dressing-case, and his brushes laid ready for use. He went in and turned the key. For a moment

he stood still and looked at the things that were his. It would have been more satisfactory to have led Mr. Gammage here by the scruff of the neck and forced him to disgorge. But that would have made a hullaballo in the house, forced an immediate explanation, and occupied valuable time. Roger knew of a better way to spend the afternoon. He dressed quickly in the clothes put ready by George. He took possession of his keys, locked everything lying about into his trunk, and went quietly downstairs. If Mr. Gammage appeared he was ready for him; but if Pamela arrived first, he meant to go to the garden-party with her and meet Mrs. Bradwardine.

The corner of the hall, where he waited, was in deep shadow and near the dining-room door. He went forward a little when he heard her step on the stairs; but with a glance that seemed to see only the tails of his coat she passed him haughtily and looked round for some one who was not there. Roger saw her face fall with disappointment.

"How quick you've been!" she said, as if his alacrity annoyed her, and she walked towards the front door, where an open carriage waited.

The parlour-maid who had been there had just gone to answer an upstairs bell, so Roger helped Pamela in, and was amused and relieved by the irreconcilable dislike expressed in her refusal to look at him. It suited his purpose exactly. She told the coachman where to go, and then she opened a large parasol and hid her face from her neighbour with it. As they moved off, Roger, looking back into the hall, thought he saw the dining-room door open, but he had no time to see more. The carriage bowled along the drive, and turned northwards across the common. Pamela did not open her mouth or once lift her parasol. She wondered at the Australian's silence, but she made no attempt to break it, while Roger compared the morning with the afternoon, and wondered what his kinsman had done that he should be treated so cavalierly. At last, when the carriage stopped at the Court Hotel, Pamela spoke over her shoulder.

"I am going in for a moment," she said; "will you wait here?"

As the girl issued her instructions in a voice of polite command, it was unnecessary to reply; but Roger got out of the carriage and held the door open for her. She descended with a flutter of frills and feathers, her eyes averted, her head in the air. But as she entered the hall, Mrs. Bradwardine and Kitty met her, and the three ladies returned to the carriage. Roger lifted his hat and offered Mrs. Bradwardine his hand, but the lady, who had once been his cordial friend, now stiffened as she glanced away from him. Roger looked at the girl beside her, and hardly knew what to do. Mr. Gammage had doubtless met her, he himself had not. In his perplexity he smiled, and the girl, looking up, smiled too, and wondered. This man had the air of distinction she had looked for in Roger Blois. She turned to him as he took his seat beside her in the carriage.

"I met the duchess this morning," she said. "She asked after you."

"How kind of her!" said Roger.

Mrs. Bradwardine and Pamela, who had been talking to each other, stopped short. They both looked at Roger, and made no attempt to hide their bewilderment and surprise. He had spoken in his natural voice, and his eyes sought Pamela's reassuringly. He saw her look of alarm. He saw Mrs. Bradwardine's unfriendly manner undergo a rapid change.

"You—you," she said, and stared as if she could hardly believe her eyes.

"Yes," said Roger, "I've come back."

"The duchess will be at the garden-party," said Kitty; and she stared too.

"You must point her out to me," said Roger.

"But you talked to her ever so long at Greymarsh."

"I have never been at Greymarsh," said Roger.

"Can't you see that, my dear?" said Mrs. Bradwardine.

"But who is the man at Greymarsh?" cried Pamela.

"An impostor."

"But who are you?"

"I am Roger Blois."

"Oh!"

Pamela shrank back into her corner of the carriage. Her thoughts were confused and whirling, her face began to flame uncomfortably. She had told this man that her father desired their marriage then, and she had shown him this morning that she was not averse from him herself.

"Of course," Mrs. Bradwardine was saying, "I saw from the first that there was something wrong. An impossible creature. I'm surprised to hear there is any Blois blood in him. I should ship him across the seas if I were you. But I don't understand the whole story yet. How do you come to be in this carriage with Pamela?"

"It's a long story," said Roger.

"Why didn't you tell me your real name long ago?" said Pamela, reproachfully. "It wasn't fair."

XXVIII

MRS. BRADWARDINE had heard Roger's story, and had scolded him for allowing such a fraud to go on.

"You can't do much when you're unconscious," he said meekly.

"You haven't been unconscious three weeks," said the rector's wife.

"I've been penniless, though, and till last Friday I was in rags. Miss Blois will bear witness to that."

"What do rags matter?" said Mrs. Bradwardine. "Why didn't you write or telegraph to me?"

"I can't sign my name yet," said Roger. "They laughed at me at the bank when I tried. I couldn't fill a telegraph-form or pay for it as long as I was at Trevalla. I really was in a hole, Mrs. Bradwardine."

"And you were ill," said Pamela, taking his part. "People can't act and think for themselves much when they are ill. But how did you get hold of your own things to-day?"

"It was very simple," said Roger. "I went upstairs and took them."

Then the carriage stopped at the garden where the Skeffington-Blewitts were giving their party, and Sir Charles Burnham, having arrived at the same moment, joined them. He spoke to the ladies, and was going to speak to Roger, when Mrs. Bradwardine said to him—

"This is Mr. Blois, Charles. The man at Greymarsh is not."

"Hullo!" said Sir Charles; and then he had to hear the whole story.

"What's become of the other chap?" he asked; and Mrs. Bradwardine said that, owing to Roger's dilatory ways, he was still at large.

"You will never be forgiven for letting Greymarsh have three weeks of Mr. Gammage," said Pamela to Roger as they joined the crowd inside the garden.

"But it was I who had the worst of it."

"Poor devil," said Roger, unexpectedly. "When I think of the time I had in the carriage this afternoon, and of that parasol——"

They stood together on the fringe of the crowd, watching it contentedly, knowing few people there. Then Roger saw some seats in a distant part of the garden, and suggested that they should stroll towards them.

"Very well," said Pamela. "But we must come back later."

"When we are inclined. I want to talk to you."

He pulled a chair aslant so that he sat with his back to the crowd and screened Pamela from the observation of passers-by. But at present no one came very close to this corner of the garden.

"What are you going to do with Mr. Gammage?" said Pamela.

"I don't know yet," said Roger. "If he shows fight——"

"He won't do that," said Pamela, disdainfully. "There is no pluck in him. He was afraid of the kangaroo."

"I suppose he was afraid of you too—of you and your parasol?"

Roger took the parasol from Pamela's hands, unfurled it, and held it over her.

"It is all very well," cried the girl, indignantly; "but he came between my father and me. We had a fearful quarrel on his account, and I ran away from home."

"Bless me!" said Roger. "Is that what you do when you are annoyed?"

"Dad and I both have the Blois temper, especially dad."

"I suffer from it myself," said Roger.

"It makes it impossible for us to live together."

"Put that idea out of your head."

"Why?"

"Because I want you to live with me."

Pamela looked up and looked down again.

"My father vows I'm a vixen," said she.

"I believe you are," said Roger.

"Then why——"

"A question of taste. Will you marry me, Pamela?"

"How can I? You are the heir of Greymarsh. I told you my father desired the match."

"Are you going to refuse me in order to provoke your father?"

"Of course not. I didn't mean that."

"Give me my answer, then—the one I want."

"Is there any hurry?"

"Oh! None at all. This year, next year, any time you please."

His ardent glance, his irony confused her.

"We have not known each other a week," she urged.

"If you don't take care I'll carry you off in the motor," he said, and he pushed back his chair a little.

"Look at that little dark man," cried Pamela, glad to change the subject. "He is staring hard at you. Now he is coming our way. Do you know him?"

"No," said Roger; "but he seems to think he knows me."

That was evident, for the little man now stopped short and raised his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I should like a few words with you."

"Certainly," said Roger. "Shall we——"

"I will sit down," said the little man, taking a chair. "This young lady may hear what I have to say. I certainly did not expect to meet you here. I have had no news since I heard first that you were drowned, and then that you were not. So it was you, after all, in the Blackfriars Hotel, and you heard what I said to Mr. Eisenstein. My eyes did not deceive me."

"I have never been in the Blackfriars Hotel in my life," said Roger.

"You will tell me next that you don't know my name," said the little man.

He looked at Roger and then he looked at Pamela, who wore white India muslin and an enchanting pale green hat that had blush rosebuds under the brim.

"Have you come into a fortune?" he said, turning abruptly to Roger again. "Who brought you to this party? Who is this young lady?"

"Who are you?" said Roger.

"Come, come, you know very well who I am." He bent close to Roger's ear, and said in a whisper, "What about that hundred pounds?"

"What hundred pounds?" said Roger, audibly.

"The proper place for the discussion of business is the office. I shall expect you there to-morrow."

"But I don't know your name and address, and I'll wager a hundred pounds you don't know mine," cried Roger.

"My name is Angelo, Mr. Gammage," said the little man, with dignity.

"My name is Blois, Mr. Angelo," said Roger.

"An alias," said Mr. Angelo, waving his hand disdainfully. "But I trust my own eyes."

"We can put you on the track of Mr. Gammage if you want him," said Roger.

"Do you know him?" said Pamela, eagerly. "Then look at this gentleman again, and use your eyes. I think you are very unobservant. Mr. Gammage has a dull glance, and coarse, ill-kept hands. He speaks like a cockney, he stands like a lout. Look again, and listen, before you make so sure."

Mr. Angelo did look again, and his shrewd eyes took stock of Roger as they had not done before.

"I believe the young lady is right," he said at last. "But at first you look the same—oh, miraculously the same. Then it was Mr. Gammage who sat in the Blackfriars Hotel and heard me call him a silly ass?"

"Probably," said Roger.

"Where is he? How has he been living these three weeks? Has he come into money?"

"I'm afraid he hasn't a penny," said Roger. "Was he in your employment?"

"He was," said Mr. Angelo. "The last thing he did was to lose me a hundred pounds. He's no good."

"Then you don't want him back again."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Angelo. "But he can come and see me if he likes. Eisenstein wants a man with a good appearance and manners for one of his jobs, and Eisenstein knows how to make people work. He is not as patient as I am."

"I may see Mr. Gammage to-night," said Roger. "I will tell him what you say."

"Very well," said Mr. Angelo, lifting his hat to Pamela as he went away. "If it was Gammage in the Blackfriars Hotel that morning, he knows what I think of him."

"You are not going to send him to prison, then," said Pamela, when Mr. Angelo was out of hearing.

"I don't know what I'm going to do yet," said Roger. "I can't tackle Mr. Gammage till I get back to Wimbledon. Shall you be ready to start soon? People can't come and sit down beside us in the carriage. Are you going to take Mrs. Bradwardine and her daughter to their hotel? That would shorten our drive, and you take such a long time to make up your mind about the simplest matter——"

"Where have you been all the afternoon?" said Mrs. Bradwardine, when they rejoined the crowd. "The duchess has been clamouring for Mr. Blois. I told her she would be disappointed in this one, and she seemed to agree with me when she heard the story. She wants Mr. Gammage to join her Camberwell Club,

and she offers to find him plenty of work in it—unpaid work, of course. I'm not coming back with you, Pamela. Charles wants us to dine with him and go to the play. So Kitty and I will get a cab and go off at once. I call this a mob, not a party. I had no idea the Skeffington-Blewitts knew such queer people. Look at that little foreigner—like one of Du Maurier's nightmares. My dear Pamela, he is taking off his hat to you. I hope he won't come near us."

"We have been talking to him," said Pamela, "Mr Gammage used to be in his office. He is rather nice."

"Get her home quickly, Mr. Blois," said Mrs. Bradwardine; and Roger took immediate steps to follow this pleasing advice. He meant to have his answer from Pamela before they reached Wimbledon, and he reflected that the big parasol would help him if it was skilfully used.

XXIX

MR. GAMMAGE did not hurry over his lunch. Mrs. Blois had vaguely told him that people went to garden-parties about four or five o'clock, and Pamela had said nothing about starting at three. It pleased him vastly to be in his old neighbourhood under such improved conditions. The outside of this house had often been the terminus of a Sunday walk, but he had never expected to sit inside it. The room had a view of the back garden, and did not command any part of the drive. Presently he heard wheels on the gravel, but he did not connect them with his own engagement, and did not hurry. He took for granted that Pamela would go to town in the motor, and he looked forward to a way of locomotion he had always condemned when others used it and desired for himself. He knew that Colonel Loraine was lying ill upstairs, and he supposed the doctor would probably come about this time of day, and come in a carriage.

When he had smoked a cigarette and finished a second whisky and soda he got up with a sleepy yawn, wished he could sit in this garden instead of driving

ten miles to another, and opened the door. The sound of departing wheels reached him, and the glimpse of a furbelowed white parasol and of a man's silk hat. He went back rather hurriedly to the dining-room and rang the bell. While he waited he mixed himself a third whisky and soda, and lighted another cigarette.

The parlour-maid, who appeared, stared as if she thought his summons an impertinence. All the younger women in the house had more or less lost their hearts to the new chauffeur, but they did not expect to find him smoking and drinking in the dining-room.

"What are you doing here?" she said.

"Enjoying myself," said Mr. Gammage, with a friendly wink. "Just show me my room, will you, my dear?"

The parlour-maid looked at the whisky and looked at Mr. Gammage. She knew all about her master's theories and the way they worked out in sudden household crises of an awkward kind. She did not know before that Brown was one of his experiments.

"You find your own room and go to sleep," she said. "That's what'll do you good."

"Just what I think," said Mr. Gammage, enjoying an unchecked yawn. "Unluckily I've other fish to fry. Come, where's that room, my girl? Don't keep me waiting longer than you can 'elp. I've an appointment with the Princess of Wales."

The parlour-maid had remained close to the door, and now, at the sound of a step in the hall, she turned her head and beckoned to George, the servant from Greymarsh, who had come to see if Mr. Gammage had finished his lunch. He stood beside the girl in the doorway, and showed no surprise.

"Do you know where my room is?" said Mr. Gammage to him.

"Yes, sir," he said; "will you come this way?"

The parlour-maid watched them depart, and then began to clear the table in a frame of mind that led to the destruction of a water-jug and three wine-glasses. She explained to the cook when she went downstairs that she had been all of a tremble because George had walked off with Brown, the chauffeur, and

what they were playing at together Heaven only knew, but she was always expecting burglaries in this house.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gammage and George went unsuspectingly upstairs to the room in which Roger had dressed. Mr. Gammage entered it first and saw no preparations for his toilet, except an apparently unpacked trunk. He turned towards George and saw the young man's face a study in alarm and blank amazement.

"They've been up to some of their monkey tricks," he muttered, and he went to an electric bell and rang it lengthily. Then he rushed about the room, opening cupboards and drawers. Mr. Gammage sat down in an easy chair.

"You may as well take off my boots," he said. He had become used to this kind of service, and liked it.

But the first lace was hardly untied when a housemaid knocked at the door and asked what was wanted. George went hurriedly outside and explained what he wanted—his gentleman's clothes and dressing-things that had been put ready more than an hour ago. This was more than a joke, he protested. The girl, of course, protested in her turn, and even offered to search the room for him.

"I've done that for myself," said George, indignantly. "You go downstairs and find out who's at the bottom of it, and come back in double-quick time, if you please."

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Gammage, as George came back into the room.

"I can't think, sir," said George; "I put all your things ready here before I had my dinner, and they're gone."

"Gone! Nonsense! Where are my keys?"

"I left them on the dressing-table sir. They are not there."

Mr. Gammage jumped up, his sleepiness gone.

"I must have my keys!" he shouted. "How am I to dress without them? Look here, you oaf, some one's dressed here already! Look at the washstand and the towels! You've come to the wrong room. That's what's the matter. My trunk? Think I don't

know my own trunk. Go and find out, and send a message to Miss Pamela. I'm keeping her waiting—all through your stupidity."

The man sulkily left the room, and returned a moment later with a scared face.

"Miss Blois left in the carriage at three o'clock, sir," he said. "And this is your room, right enough."

"Miss Blois left . . . without me. . . . Rubbish . . . I heard a carriage . . . it was the doctor . . . the doctor's been washing his hands here, of course. . . . You go and find Mrs. Loraine. . . . I want a word with her. . . . I want to know where my keys are, and if the doctor's wife comes with him on his rounds. . . . I just saw a parasol and tall hat——"

"The doctor is here now, sir," said George, stolidly. "He has just arrived."

"Then who has been in this room? Who is with Miss Blois? Who has stolen my things?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said George; "but it's very unpleasant."

"Is there any one else stopping in the house?"

"No one at all, sir."

"You tell them I want to see Mrs. Loraine."

The man went away again and soon returned.

"The doctor has gone, and the parlour-maid has orders not to disturb Mrs. Loraine," he said. "She is lying down. But, of course, if you consider it necessary——"

"Oh, it isn't necessary," said Mr. Gammage, huffily. "I've had my keys stolen, and all my silver brushes and bottles—but it's of no consequence; quite a matter of course in this 'ouse, if all I've heard is true. But I'll fetch a bobby, I think."

"What you want is a locksmith," said George, lifting one end of the trunk and letting it fall again. "I believe some one's packed all your things in here. It's a practical joke, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if one of them hussies downstairs—there was nothing they wasn't up to last time I was here—apple-pie beds and ruffling my hair when the colonel's bell rang, so as I shouldn't answer it quick. Shall I go for a

locksmith, sir? I'll tell them downstairs I'm going, and when I get back I'll lay I'll find the keys sticking in that trunk."

"Then who has used those towels?" said Mr. Gammage.

George scratched his head. He did not want the police hurried into the house, making everything unpleasant below stairs; but his powers of invention were not inexhaustible. Who on earth could have used the towels?

"I'll fetch you some others at once, sir," he said obligingly. "Are you going to the garden-party?"

"How can I go like this?" said Mr. Gammage, putting a thumb behind each lapel of his coat, and showing his checks to George. "I don't mind in the country, of course, but here in town I like to be correct. I'll have a toddle on the common, and you fetch that locksmith along."

Mr. Gammage did not like the thing that had happened. At first sight it suggested a burglary; but burglars do not pack their booty in a trunk, lock the trunk, and leave it behind. George's theory would not hold water either. It was impossible to believe that in any respectable house the maids would play such a trick on their master's guest—even to amuse themselves and annoy a dolt like George. The man who drove off with Pamela need not be connected with the matter. Mr. Gammage assured and reassured himself of that as he walked across the common. That man must have been some friend of the Loraines, some neighbour going to the garden-party. It was beastly rude of Pamela not to wait or send any message, but Mr. Gammage supposed she had a down on him now that she knew her father favoured their marriage. So far the courtship had been more prickles than honey, and Mr. Gammage sometimes thought wistfully of Florrie and Julia.

It was like his luck to feel worried in this way the very first time he saw the good old common again. Every landmark pleased him, and when he got to the top of Putney Hill he looked at its cheerful pavements with real delight. How unlike the melancholy

solitude of the marshes ; how lively a contrast to dusty, empty lanes ! For a time he feasted his eyes on motors, bicycles, tradesmen's carts, perambulators, two and three abreast, pedestrians, dogs, organ-grinders, carriages, the usual mixed procession of fine summer afternoons ! Then, his heart-strings stirred, perhaps, he suddenly resolved to run a risk he had steadily refrained from hitherto. He hailed a passing hansom, and told the man to drive to the Red Lion on Barnes Common. The Red Lion is close to the Terrace, where the Martins lived, and Mr. Gammage meant to dismiss his hansom there and walk past the house. But he hardly touched the ground, and was feeling in his pocket for the driver's fee, when a girl, glowing with surprise and pleasure, almost ran into his arms.

" Bert ! " she cried.

And before he knew what he was doing, Mr. Gammage had looked with recognition in his eyes at Julia. He just had presence of mind enough left to tell his cab to wait, and to realize that the shorter he made the interview the better. Of course, as Roger Blois, he ought not to have known Julia, but as Herbert Gammage he knew her very well, and would be hanged if she could not hold her own with any fine lady when it came to sparkling eyes and a colour as fresh as paint.

" What are you doing in Barnes ? " he asked.

" I'm staying just along here to the Martins," she said. " When Florrie got engaged to Mr. Salter she wrote more friendly, and I said I'd be glad to visit them. But what's come to 'e, Bert ? You'm so fine—and riding, too ! You might have spared a penny for a letter."

" But you thought I was drowned," he said blankly. " You don't expect letters from dead people. Now I come to think of it, why weren't you more astonished to see me alive ? "

" I thought 'e'd get here somehow," said Julia, blankly. " Be you better ? "

" I'm very well," said Mr. Gammage, " but I'm in a hurry. Business is business, and, as you see, I'm getting on. I'll come and see you one of these days, though. How long are you going to stay ? "

"But we'm engaged to be married, Bert. You've never gone and forgotten that again, have 'e?"

"Rather not," said Bert, one foot on the step of his hansom. "I'll write."

"And you remember you're Bert all right."

Mr. Gammage put his head through the trap-door of his cab and told the man to drive back to Putney Hill. As he sat down, the sense of Julia's words reached his brains, and he nodded gaily towards her dejected face as he drove away.

"What do you mean?" he shouted.

And she shouted something after him that he only half heard. It sounded, he thought, as if the name of Roger Blois ended it, and for a moment he felt inclined to stop the cab. But it was taking him swiftly and comfortably away from her, and the pleasant sense of escape from danger soon surmounted a nasty qualm of fear. For Julia was a danger he recognized, and he determined that he would leave Wimbledon to-morrow rather than run the risk of meeting her again. He took his cab back to Wimbledon, but dismissed it about a quarter of a mile from Cæsar's Lodge. His caution was aroused, and he did not wish the man to see where he was staying, because Julia might recognize him and ask questions. As he turned in at the gates and was strolling along the drive, a burly, thick-set man he did not know accosted him.

"Can you come to the motor-house a minute?" he said.

"What for?" said Mr. Gammage.

"I've something to show you—something you'll be glad to see again."

Mr. Gammage's thoughts naturally flew to his lost keys. He looked at the man, and tried to classify him, but beyond recognizing that his clothes were uncared for, his manner truculent, and his expression villainous, he did not get far.

"Who are you?" he said.

"Are you coming or are you not?" said the man, with a stealthy glance at the front of the house, which was now in sight.

"I don't know that I am," said Mr. Gammage.
"It isn't keys, is it?"

"Keys it is, s'welp me," said the man.

"Why can't you bring 'em here?" said Mr. Gammage.

"I've got something to say," the man assured him earnestly.

So they turned together down the overgrown path that led to the further end of the long garden and the motor-house.

XXX

COLONEL and Mrs. Blois had arrived and were sitting with Mrs. Loraine in the drawing-room. When they were told of Colonel Loraine's illness they both said that Mrs. Loraine ought to have put them all off, and sent Pamela back to Greymarsh. But Mrs. Loraine assured them that her husband was better to-night, and would be better still to-morrow, and that it would do him all the good in the world to see Anthony. She told them how Dobbs had upset him, and with some difficulty made Mrs. Blois understand who Dobbs was, and she explained that their present chauffeur was not "reclaimed" from any bad habits, and that he was, in fact, a most successful experiment of her own. She asked a few questions about the Australian, and said that she had unfortunately been upstairs when he arrived, and that she had not had the pleasure of seeing him yet. She observed that directly she introduced this topic Colonel Blois grew rather fidgety and silent, as if it was a difficult topic to deal with, while Mrs. Blois, on the contrary, was quite ready to talk of the young man, and in her ambiguous disjointed way to disparage him.

"Poor Pamela," she said, with a sigh. "How she will have hated a long drive with him! I have missed her dreadfully, because she did take him off my hands a good deal, much as she disliked him. She is such a dear child, if you take her in the right way—at least, she always has been to me, though I am not her mother

and cannot expect to have any voice in her affairs. But I dare say it will all come right somehow. Things often do if you leave them alone. At the same time I do not believe that Mr. Blois at Greymarsh as a permanent inmate would be really agreeable to you, Anthony——”

“Has any one proposed that he should be a permanent inmate?” asked Colonel Blois.

“I’m sure I don’t know what you propose, except that he should marry Pamela,” said Mrs. Blois. “But you can’t suppose she would leave home with a young man like that. If she just stayed about with us she might not notice him so much. Besides, it seems fairer.”

“Pamela says he is impossible,” said Mrs. Loraine.

“That is the word for him,” said Mrs. Blois, delightedly; “just what you said yourself, Anthony, the night he arrived. He is the kind of young man who makes you feel all pins and needles when any one else is present, because he does such odd things—quite small things, of course—I always tell Pamela so; but when he appeared at our garden-party in a frock-coat and flannels—yes, I know, Anthony—George is a very stupid boy and a trained valet—but you can’t valet an accent, can you?—perhaps a first-rate elocutionist three hours a day—he would have to come to town on purpose——”

Colonel Loraine had marched to the other end of the long room. His wife’s babble provoked him, but he never lost his temper with her as he did a dozen times a day with Pamela. He walked up and down without answering her remarks, and had arrived at the window where the ladies were sitting when they heard a carriage stop at the front door. A moment later Pamela and Roger entered the room, and Mrs. Loraine hardly knew what surprised her most, to see her niece accompanied by her chauffeur, or to find that Colonel Blois and his wife seemed to recognize him. Before she had time to speak, while she was still staring at his frock-coat and silk hat, Pamela actually led him up to her as if he was a stranger.

“Mr. Blois, Aunt Irene,” she said.

"My dear Pamela," gasped Mrs. Loraine.

Meanwhile Colonel and Mrs. Blois were eyeing Roger as if they discovered some odd agreeable change in him, and also eyeing Pamela as if her radiant face amazed them. She had turned now to her step-mother, and kissed her affectionately. Then, a little shamefacedly, she approached her father. He took her hand, and held it in his a moment, and in this way he made his apology. Then he kissed her. The next moment she had tucked her hand under his arm, and marched him to a corner of the room, where they were out of hearing, and, with the help of a screen, nearly out of sight. They sat down together, and she whispered in his ear.

"I'm going to marry Mr. Blois, dad," she said.

Colonel Blois looked at the girl in stupefaction.

"Rather sudden," he said.

"Ever since Friday," said Pamela. "Plenty of time to make up your mind."

"You are sure you have made up your mind?"

Pamela nodded, turned red, and put her hand coaxingly on her father's arm.

"Come and talk to him," she said.

"In a minute," said Colonel Blois, with a profound sigh. He did not look at all overjoyed. "I'm afraid you're doing this to please me, my child."

"Not a bit of it, dad," said Pamela, cheerfully; "I adore him."

"You—what?" shouted the colonel.

"Sh!" said Pamela, putting her finger to her lips. "You don't know everything yet, dad."

The colonel got up with a gloomy air, and accompanied his daughter to the other end of the room. But before they reached the others every one was alarmed and scattered by the irruption into the room of the parlour-maid, white and stammering with fright. She could hardly speak, but the two men understood that she had come for help; and instantly followed where she led. Mrs. Loraine and Pamela ran after them, and arrived at the motor-house in time to hear sounds of a scuffle within, loud cries for help,

and broken curses. The men rushed inside, the women waited, and a moment later Colonel Blois appeared, supporting a figure so dusty, torn, and dishevelled that the ladies looked away for very shame. Just behind came Roger with a strong hand on Dobbs. Every one walked back to the house, the men too much occupied to speak, the women too much alarmed. When the little procession arrived inside the hall, Colonel Blois opened the door of the smoking-room, and led his man there. The ladies he waved back to the drawing-room. Roger followed him, with Dobbs still in tow. He turned to shut the door, and so for a moment Mr. Gammage did not see his face. But indeed, poor Mr. Gammage was in no condition to see yet. He was badly shaken, and nearly blind with dust and fright. When the colonel and Roger went into the motor-house they found him lying face downwards, while Dobbs showered blows on his writhing body. In the confusion and acute humiliation of his rescue he had seen no one, noticed nothing. He was hardly able to speak yet, and as he tried to do so he felt the aching bones of his body to see if they were broken, he mopped at his face and his neck with his handkerchief, and he ruefully looked at his new coat that was stained and torn beyond repair.

"He asked me to go to the motor-house and get some keys I'd lost," he said to the colonel, "and the moment we got there he squared up to me, and said I'd taken the bread out of his mouth, and when I asked him what he meant, he let fly and knocked me down. I've never so much as seen the beggar before, and don't know anything about his place. I believe he's a prize-fighter and mad drunk. But I'll have him locked up, whatever comes of it."

"He took you for me," said Roger, coming forward. He had locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

Mr. Gammage staggered to his feet, stared at Roger with the terror of death in his face, and fell in a heap upon his chair again.

"You!" he gasped.

"Yes," said Roger. "Tell Colonel Blois my name and tell him yours."

"I thought you were dead," cried Mr. Gammage, looking at Roger over his arm, for he had raised it nervously as if he expected a blow. "I swear I thought you were drowned."

"The police will be here directly," said Colonel Blois, watching the two young men intently.

Meanwhile Dobbs edged stealthily towards a heavy portière, and lifted it cautiously. The door behind it stood slightly ajar. He glanced swiftly at the two men standing over his late enemy, he slid like a rat behind the heavy curtain, he cleared the dinner-table of some of its silver with a sweep of his hand, and was out of the window and quietly escaping through the back door while a leisurely policeman tramped along the drive to the front of the house.

"Hullo!" said Roger, looking blankly round as he took the key out of his pocket, when some one knocked.

By the time the policeman entered the room, heard what was wanted, discovered the portière and the other door, and pointed out the disorder of the dinner-table, Dobbs had, of course, got clear away. But the policeman spent a happy evening chasing him. Meanwhile, Colonel Blois and Roger returned to Mr. Gammage. He showed no fight.

"What'd be the good now you've turned up?" he said sulkily. "There's that Mrs. Bradwardine knows you, and there's people at Trevalla knows me. I'm not denying anything. I'm Bert Gammage, and you're Roger Blois—I suppose."

"Thank God for that," said Colonel Blois, holding out his hand to his heir.

"What are we going to do?" said Roger, glancing at the beaten abject figure in the easy-chair.

"I thought you were dead, and that it didn't matter," said Mr. Gammage, repeating his defence.

"Didn't matter!" cried the colonel, "to lie and steal and defraud us all—to try to marry my daughter under a false name, you wretched scoundrel!"

"I thought he was dead," reiterated Mr. Gammage.

"For all I knew I was his heir. He told me he wasn't married, and had no brothers and sisters, and I've Blois blood in me as good as you, colonel."

"What's he mean?" said Colonel Blois.

"It's true," said Roger. "His grandfather and mine were brothers."

Their discussion was interrupted by one of those prosaic trifles that will break in at inconvenient times. The dressing-gong sounded sonorously through the house. Colonel Blois looked from one man to the other, and addressed Roger.

"It is you who are staying in this house," he said.

Mr. Gammage gave vent to a sob. His body ached, he had only a pound or two in his pocket, his clothes were not fit for public view. Also, he wondered what had become of the policeman.

"Do you think your friends at Barnes would take you in?" Roger said to him.

"I dessay," said Mr. Gammage, too much crushed to wonder how Roger knew of their existence.

"Get a cab and go there, then," said Roger. "I'll see you to-morrow."

Mr. Gammage lamely rose to his feet, and tried again to dust himself down. He felt in his pockets, and pulled out a handful of money, gold and silver mixed.

"I'll walk," he said, "that money's yours. I don't know whether I'll ever be able to pay you back what I've spent, but I will if I can—if you don't send me to prison. I suppose you could."

Roger gathered the money into his hands again and returned it to Mr. Gammage.

"I make you a present of it," he said; "and don't run away, or do anything stupid of that kind between now and to-morrow. I don't owe you much, but I do owe something to Julia. She helped me when I was down."

"Julia's at the Martins'," said Mr. Gammage. "I saw her this afternoon."

"She's a very good girl," said Roger, "and she thinks more of you than you deserve."

XXXI

THE Martins were sitting at high tea with Mr. Salter when there was a knock at the front door. Teddy, the youngest boy, answered it, and returned a moment later looking uncertain and excited. He shut the dining-room door behind him, and addressed his mother. Mr. Martin had not come back from the city yet.

"Bert's in the hall," he said. "He wants to speak to you."

Julia, who was at table, and who had come back full of her recent encounter with Bert, jumped up in a flurry. Mrs. Martin looked at Florrie.

"Seems he's just had a scrap," whispered Teddy. "His clothes are torn, and his cheek is bleeding."

Florrie looked at Mr. Salter, beside whom she sat.

"They've met," she said in an undertone; "perhaps the police are after him."

"Let's see," said Mr. Salter, getting up calmly.

Neither Florrie nor he had said a word to any one about their meeting with Roger. They had agreed as they walked home, that for poor silly Bert's sake, the quieter his escapade was kept the better.

But now the whole family assembled in the little hall, where Mr. Gammage supported his aching bones on the only chair. Julia shrieked when she saw him.

"What's happened to 'e, Bert?" she cried. "Your coat be all torn and dusty. Oh! and your poor face."

She pulled out her handkerchief, and, bending tenderly over him, wiped the blood from his forehead with it.

"Have you had an accident?" said Mrs. Martin, wishing her husband was at home, but reflecting thankfully that Florrie was equally capable of deciding what it was best to do.

"Yes, I have," groaned Mr. Gammage. "I believe my back's broken."

"Run for the doctor, Teddy," said Mrs. Martin.

"Can he get me a bed somewhere?" said Mr. Gammage; "that's what I feel like, and I'm not equal to running about 'unting for one."

"But where have you sprung from?" said Mrs. Martin. "Where have you been staying since you left Trevalla? Julia says——"

"I've been in the country," said Mr. Gammage. "I'll tell you all about it to-morrer."

Mr. Salter now took Bert by the arm, and led him into an adjoining room.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "pull yourself together. What I want to know is, are you safe here, or are they after you?"

"No one's after me," said Mr. Gammage, rather sullenly. "What do you mean?"

"We know," said Mr. Salter, impressively; "Florrie and I have seen him—on Wimbledon Common."

"Him! Who?"

"Mr. Blois—the real Mr. Blois. He told us all about it."

"What did he say?"

Mr. Salter stroked his moustache reflectively. "He said some nasty things," he admitted; "that's why I asked if they were after you."

"Well, they're not," said Mr. Gammage, trying to carry the matter off with a high air. "In fact, Mr. Roger Blois is coming here to-morrow to see me and Julia."

"That's funny," said Mr. Salter. "Did he tear your coat?"

"No, he didn't . . . never touched me . . . too much the gentleman."

"That I don't believe," said Mr. Salter, "if ever one man was burning to go for another. . . . Who did go for you, then? Any one else owe you a grudge?"

"Not now," said Mr. Gammage, "he's paid it . . . at least, he was after the other chap, and found me. See?"

"Not altogether. Why is Mr. Blois coming to see Julia?"

"He owes her a turn, he says."

Mr. Salter looked long and pensively at his friend. Then he whistled.

"I always said you were a lucky beggar," he observed.

"I feel damned lucky," said Mr. Gammage.

"Tell you what, if Mrs. Martin has no objection, I'll lend you my room for a week. Bob's away on his holiday, so I can sleep with Teddy. Of course, I consider the arrangement a temporary one."

"You're a good chap, Salter," said Mr. Gammage. "I haven't met a better, though I have been living as a visitor in marble halls."

Mrs. Martin raised no objection to Mr. Salter's proposal. Indeed, she seemed rather pleased to see Mr. Gammage again. She believed, of course, what Julia told her, that he had been at Trevalla until a week ago, and that he had been seriously ill there. She felt some natural curiosity about his further adventures, and especially about his accident, but it was plain to both women that they could not question him to-night. In fact, when he had swallowed a cup of tea, he was glad to go to bed. The doctor arrived later, and found that no bones were broken. He talked of a shock to the system—the necessity of perfect quiet. But next day Mr. Gammage managed to crawl downstairs in the course of the morning, and, finding Julia alone, he at once renewed his courtship of her. Her delighted response was most consoling, and he had no doubt at the end of an hour that of the three girls he had lately wooed she suited him best. She adored him, she asked for nothing better than his affection and fidelity. He felt that he could gratefully give her both, and they agreed that they would marry as soon as Mr. Gammage could support a home.

"It won't be much of a home," said Mr. Gammage, his memory harking back to Greymarsh.

"But you said yesterday you were getting on so well," said Julia. "Some day, maybe, we'll live in this terrace, and be so grand as uncle and aunt be now."

Mr. Gammage let Julia clatter on—made no attempt to undeceive her. He waited in much suspense for Roger's arrival, and hoped that the girl beside him would help to turn his kinsman's wrath. He turned white with apprehension when he heard the sounds of arrival in the hall, and he staggered weakly to his feet

as Roger entered the room. Julia jumped up too, staring from one man to the other, her eyes round, her mouth open with surprise. But Roger went straight up to her and took her hands in his.

"I got away beautifully, in a motor-car," he said. "But you know all about that, I suppose; at least, you must have guessed when they brought the wrong man back. There was more than three pounds in the pig, Julia. I've kept all the pieces, and I'm going to have them put together, and it shall stand in my house in memory of you."

The girl looked up at his face, as she had sometimes done at Trevalla, confused both by his likeness to her lover and by his unfamiliar voice and manner.

"Then you're not Bert," she said at last. "'E told a true tale, but I thought for sure 'e were Bert."

She blushed and hung her head. Then a new idea drove her embarrassing memories from her mind, and she looked inquiringly at Mr. Gammage.

"Did 'e take this gentleman's clothes and money?" she asked.

"I thought he was drowned. I meant no harm to any one," said Mr. Gammage, shuffling uncomfortably from one foot to another.

"Well I never," said Julia.

"Are you going to forgive him?" said Roger.

"We're going to be married as soon as we can," said Julia, simply. "We've just fixed it up. You don't bear him a grudge, sir, do 'e? He meant no harm, he says."

Roger turned to Mr. Gammage. "I want a few words with you," he said. "Is there another room?"

"I'll go," said Julia, obligingly.

"You really mean to marry this girl?" said Roger, when she had disappeared.

"Depends on you," said Mr. Gammage, gloomily. "Don't suppose she'll want a convict."

"What do you mean to do for a living?"

"Same as before, if I can get a job. All I'm good for."

"Would you like to go out to Australia?"

"I should 'ate it," said Mr. Gammage, ingenuously. "My 'eart's in Putney."

Roger then gave Mr. Angelo's message, and found to his surprise that his kinsman jumped at it.

"Mr. Eisenstein employs a lot of travellers," he said. "Perhaps, if I lay myself out to please him he'd give me a chance. Often and often, when I've seen one of those broughams full of cardboard boxes, I've said to myself, 'that's what I'd like to be.'"

"Very well," said Roger, after he had said what he considered it necessary to say about Mr. Gammage's unscrupulous appropriation of another man's name and property. "You must know as well as I do that to rise in a business like that you've got to work hard and keep honest. Dishonest men make money . . . lots of them . . . but they're a different grain from you. You lay yourself out to please Mr. Eisenstein and behave well to Julia, and you won't hear anything more from me. You can thank Julia . . . not me."

Mr. Gammage felt too much dazed by this sudden removal of his worst fears to answer very coherently or to observe at the moment that his kinsman did not offer him his hand as he departed. He had just remembered it with shame when Julia came back into the room too radiant and eager to notice her lover's downcast face.

"Bert," she cried, "darling Bert . . . we're to be married as soon as we like . . . down to Trevalla, of course . . . and he and his young lady will come there on their wedding-jaut."

"Didn't know he had a young lady," said Mr. Gammage.

"He has just told me all about her. He hadn't one when he left Trevalla a week ago. It do seem quick work, to be sure . . . but then, look at you and me. Her name is the same as his, he tells me . . . Blois . . . Miss Pamela Blois . . . and she lives down to Greymarsh."

"I'm blessed," said Mr. Gammage. "Why, she's only known him since Friday, and she wouldn't look——"

He checked himself suddenly, and changed the subject before Julia could ask inconvenient questions.

"Very kind of him to give us permission to marry at once," he said. "But what have we got to marry on? Nothing at all, my girl, but 'opes, and don't you forget it."

"That's what you think," said Julia, delightedly. "It's all along of my pig I gave him. He can't forget, he says, as I trusted him with all the money I had. Of course, I thought he was you. I wouldn't have trusted a stranger. But he's rich, and he's going to furnish a house for me, and give me a hundred a year . . . settle it, he said . . . a hundred a year! Bert . . . now are you going to say we can't be married? Me, with a hundred a year, and you getting on so well."

"Furnish a house and give you a hundred a year! and me with Eisenstein and Co. Well, really, Julia, if your fancy isn't running away with you, I think we might . . . when I've made sure of my job, of course."

"Be you going to take a new job? Mind you say you want a holiday in August, then. We'll be married in August, when Mr. Blois and his lady come to Rockmouth. He wants to show her Rockmouth, he says, and Coffin Bay, and our window where he jumped out, and the moor where he found the motor. What have you got to show me, Bert? Where have you been all this time? Can we go there on our wedding-jaut?"

"I'm afraid not," said Mr. Gammage. "It's a long way off. Besides, to tell you the truth, I never want to see the place again."

"Weren't you happy there?"

"Not exactly."

"Was it because you missed me?"

"I dessay," said Mr. Gammage.

Julia kissed him.

